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## Gender Mainstreaming and Gender Policies in Contemporary Taiwan

By Doris T. Chang<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract

In 1995, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (hereafter referred to as the Platform for Action) promulgated during the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women called for the use of gender mainstreaming as a strategy in policy formulations for pursuing the goals of gender equality. Feminist leaders of NGOs who joined the Taiwanese government in the mid-1990s were strategically positioned to contribute to policy formulations that would integrate gender-mainstreaming perspectives into policies and institutions in the Taiwanese government. Among the various approaches to gender-mainstreaming, taking positive actions to set pro-women policy agendas have been the predominant approach deployed by the Taiwanese government for promoting gender parity. However, the government's gender-mainstreaming strategies also include limited applications of the expert-technocratic approach to policy-making and the transversal approach for gauging public opinions through dialogues in citizens' forums to explore ways to meet the needs of women from diverse backgrounds. This article assesses the progress the Taiwanese government and civil society have made toward eliminating gender inequality as well as the specific areas that still need improvement before greater gender parity can be achieved.

*Keywords:* Taiwan, gender-mainstreaming policies, government-feminist NGO partnership.

### Introduction

In the post-Cold War era of the 1990s, Taiwan, an island a hundred miles east of Mainland China, was transformed into a newly consolidated democracy. Thereafter feminist activists from newly formed non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the island's civil society pressured the Taiwanese government to enact a series of gender-equality policies and legislations. By the mid-1990s, feminist leaders from NGOs were invited into the government apparatus to serve as part-time advisers for the formulation of gender-sensitive policies (Lee 2011). The transformation of Taiwanese feminist leadership from outside critics to state feminists and advisers to the government coincided with the timing of the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing (1995). As the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (hereafter referred to as the Platform for Action) called for gender mainstreaming in each nation's formulations of laws and policies, feminist activists who joined the Taiwanese government were strategically positioned to contribute to policy formulations that would integrate feminist perspectives into policies and institutions of the Taiwanese government. According to the United Nations, gender mainstreaming is defined as follows:

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Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programs, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality (United Nations Economic and Social Council 1997).

Among different approaches to gender mainstreaming, a government's consultation with feminist-NGOs to formulate pro-women policies is sometimes referred to as an "agenda-setting model" for taking "positive actions" in order to reverse past gender inequities (Squires 2005). Since 2006, the Taiwanese government has adopted numerous policies and programs analogous to the positive-actions approach to gender mainstreaming. It provides financial subsidies to socioeconomically disadvantaged women, designing gender-specific programs and policies that would meet women's needs, and set quotas for recruiting and retaining women to fill leadership positions in governmental and educational institutions, so that there would be greater gender parity in positions of power (Peng et al. 2015).

The second approach, the technocratic model to gender mainstreaming, relies mainly on the expertise of government bureaucrats to formulate and implement policies that would integrate women into the traditionally male-dominated public sphere, by devising laws and policies that would safeguard equal treatment and opportunities for women and men. The third approach is what Squires termed the transformational diversity model of mainstreaming through a transversal deliberative process. Instead of relying on government officials and feminist NGOs to contribute to policy-making, marginalized sectors of the society that were previously excluded from policy debates are invited to participate in citizens' forums to express their opinions through a democratic deliberative process. That way, voices from diverse sectors of the society from the bottom up can be heard and incorporated into formulation of policies that could potentially dismantle intersectional inequalities based on gender, sexual identities, ethnicity, class, age, and disabilities (Squires 2005).

Squires' formulation of diversity model of gender mainstreaming is strongly influenced by Nira Yuval-Davis' conceptualization of transversality. According to Yuval-Davis, transversal politics consists of three main features: First, a more complete and fuller knowledge about a topic or policy cannot be achieved without incorporating the perspectives of diverse individuals, since each person's perspective is only partial and incomplete. Secondly, differences of people's backgrounds and perspectives should be respected with a commitment to achieving equality. Thirdly, people who self-identify as belonging to a certain social group could have different perspectives and status than others within the same social group. As participants in a citizens' forum engage in a conversation to negotiate and reach a consensual political position, they will mutually influence and modify each other's taken-for-granted assumptions in the process of exchanging ideas and perspectives. Rather than conceptualizing gender, race, disability, sexuality, or age as separate categories for mainstreaming policies, the transversal approach to mainstreaming offers the transformational potential for developing a more intersectional, complete, and cohesive diversity approach. (Yuval-Davis 1999; Squires 2007)

In 2012, the forty-seven member states of the Council of Europe launched the Transversal Program on Gender Equality. Its goal is to support gender mainstreaming and women's

empowerment while taking into account the diversity, marginalization, and discrimination of peoples within Europe along the lines of race, immigrant status, class, sexual identities, disabilities, religious affiliations, and age. Among the strategic objectives of the Transversal Program on Gender Equality were combating stereotypes and sexism and achieving greater gender parity in access and participation of women and men in institutions of political decision-making and the justice system. In addition to the transversal program's recommendation of integrating gender-sensitive perspectives into all policy-making and implementation in all of its member states, the Council of Europe also values the knowledge and expertise of gender experts in its member-nations' governments to devise and implement specific positive-actions programs for meeting its gender-parity strategic objectives (Council of Europe 2014, 2016). Thus, the gender-mainstreaming program in the Council of Europe can be characterized as a hybrid synthesis of deploying transversal, expert-technocratic, and positive-actions approaches.

While taking positive actions to set agendas for gender mainstreaming have been the primary strategy adopted by most governmental ministries in Taiwan, only one-fifth of mainstreaming policy objectives in thirteen ministries surveyed were informed by intersectional analysis of various types of inequalities in society (Peng et al. 2015). Since gender inequality is related to other categories of social inequalities, this deficiency illustrates that the intersectional approach to analyzing societal inequalities should be included to inform each ministry's implementation of gender mainstreaming policies and programs.

In recent years, state feminists affiliated with feminist NGOs in the Taiwanese government have deployed the transversal approach to soliciting opinions from ordinary women of diverse and marginalized backgrounds in citizens' forums to explore ways to meet their needs. (Lee 2014). The challenge for various ministries of the Taiwanese government will be to translate the relevant data and public opinions gathered from these citizens' forums into gender mainstreaming policy objectives that would lessen the intersectional inequalities along the lines of gender in relationship with other categories of societal inequalities. To this end, the expertise of the government's gender-policy bureaucrats and advice of feminist NGOs can all play a part in translating the results of these public opinion polls into tangible mainstreaming policies.

This article will assess the effectiveness of applying the agenda-setting positive-actions approach to increasing women's representations in the Taiwanese legislature and educational institutions. Moreover, the persistence of horizontal gender segregation in certain fields of study in institutions of higher learning will be discussed. Consistent with the Platform for Action's call for governments' partnership with the civil society to create more job opportunities and affordable childcare services for working women, I will evaluate the Taiwanese government's positive-actions approach to partnering with NGOs and private companies to enhance women's participation in the workforce and alleviate working mothers' double burdens. Overall, this article will assess the progress that Taiwanese government and civil society have made toward eliminating gender inequality as well as the specific areas that still need improvement before greater gender parity can be achieved.

### **Gender-Mainstreaming in Governmental Institutions and Women's Political Leadership**

Taking the positive-actions approach to gender mainstreaming, the Taiwanese government, in the mid-1990s, invited feminist leaders and lawyers from NGOs in Taipei to serve within the newly formed Commission for the Promotion of Women's Rights (CPWR) as advisers to the premier, alongside civil officials from governmental departments that formulated and

implemented policies pertaining to women. This forged a partnership between the Taiwanese government and feminist leaders from the civil society (Lin 2008). The latter were thus transformed from outside critics of governmental policies to become state feminists who participated in setting agendas for promoting greater gender parity within the state and the society. However, the part-time advisers in CPWR only met on a quarterly basis to assess women's needs, formulate various gender-sensitive policies, and monitor the government's progress in implementing pro-women policies. As part-time advisers to the government, CPWR members' influence on policy-making remained limited (Lee 2014; Chang 2009b).

In an effort to integrate gender mainstreaming into governmental institutions, the CPWR, in 2006, urged every department and ministry of the government to create a gender-equality task force. In order to include the input of civil society into policy-making for gender mainstreaming, it was mandated that at least three members of the task force should be academics with expertise on gender issues or activists from feminist NGOs. The gender-equality task force was charged with coordinating with relevant civil officials within each department to draft a gender-mainstreaming action plan, monitoring the department's implementation, and conducting an annual internal assessment of the progress made in accordance with the plan (Department of Gender Equality 2011).

Based on CPWR's recommendation, each ministry in the Executive Yuan of the Taiwanese government was instructed to formulate gender-sensitive goals and objectives that would align with the ministry's assigned responsibilities, taking into account women's experiences and perspectives. Civil servants who formulate and implement gender-related policies were required to complete at least one day of training annually on the best practices for gathering relevant data on men and women, analyze and assess gender disparities based on the data, recommend policy revisions to close the gender gap, and evaluate and readjust goals and estimated annual budget for implementing gender-sensitive programs of their respective ministries (Executive Yuan 2012).

Based on the study commissioned by the Executive Yuan of Taiwanese government in 2015, researchers found that most ministries within the Taiwanese government have taken positive actions by setting up quota systems and targeted social programs to promote women's representations and welfare in society rather than integrating gender-sensitive perspectives into the formulation of all relevant public policies. Many government ministries have conducted annual internal assessment of the effectiveness of strategic tools used for gender mainstreaming, such as training sessions for gender-conscious-raising, statistical analysis of data on women and men, and the performance of the gender equality task force. Rather than evaluating the effectiveness of these strategic means for achieving the goals of gender mainstreaming, these assessment reports revealed that many ministries were treating the implementation of these strategic tools as an end in itself, rather than as means for achieving gender-equality goals. Once the assessment forms were filled out by a designated government worker in charge of gender mainstreaming in a ministry, an outside expert would assess the ministry's effectiveness in meeting its stated gender-equality goals, then suggest recommendations for changes. At the end, only about one third of ministries responded constructively to external experts' recommendations for changes and adjusted their future gender-equality goals based on the experts' recommendations (Peng et al. 2015).

Based on the transversal approach to gender mainstreaming, relevant ministries in the government should set up good channels of communication for the planning, execution, and assessment of gender-responsive policies. In actual practice, inter-ministerial communication and collaboration in the Taiwanese government remained limited. Because of the division of labor in the bureaucracy, most ministries focused on fulfilling their own designated responsibilities. The

few instances where there were extensive communication and collaboration between ministries were when there was a need to jointly solve a problem by exchanging critical information (Peng et al. 2015).

In the Executive Yuan, most personnel in charge of implementing gender-equality goals and policies were junior bureaucrats without a comprehensive understanding of the mission and purpose of gender mainstreaming. These junior civil servants had other responsibilities in their work unit in addition to being put in charge of working on gender-equality goals. Since there is no additional financial compensation for taking on these tasks, many civil servants simply filled out the forms to fulfill minimal requirements. Based on the above-mentioned analysis derived from the qualitative data gathered for the study commissioned by the Executive Yuan of Taiwanese government in 2015, there is definitely a need to recruit gender scholar-experts from academia and activists from feminist NGOs to serve as full-time coordinators for gender mainstreaming in each ministry. The implementation of this approach in the offing would be in line with both the positive-actions approach of government-feminist NGO partnership and the vision of the technocratic approach for full-time gender experts to serve as formulators, coordinators, and monitors of gender mainstreaming policies within each ministry of the government. These gender experts can then be put in charge of serving as liaisons between ministries and among different departments within a ministry to fulfill the goals and objectives of gender mainstreaming (Peng et al. 2015). Based on the results of Peng's 2015 study commissioned by the Executive Yuan, it would appear that the government would have to make achieving gender mainstreaming goals one of its policy priorities and appropriate the necessary resources to that end.

Whereas the United Nations recommended that gender-sensitivity training should be integrated into all personnel training workshops in all levels of the government, the Taiwanese government only requires civil servants not directly involved in formulating and implementing gender-related policies to attend one or two hours of gender-sensitivity training annually (Executive Yuan 2012). It is doubtful whether a couple of hours of training could substantially raise a government worker's gender consciousness, particularly since more than two-thirds of participants who voluntarily attended more training than the minimum annual requirements in most departments were women rather than men. Moreover, most training sessions involved lectures or film viewing where trainees were passive audiences. It would have been a more effective format for active learning if trainees could engage in group discussions to brainstorm ways to work toward achieving the gender-equality goals proposed by their respective work units (Peng et al. 2015).

Consistent with the Platform for Action's call for integrating more women into positions of political leadership at the highest levels of the government, the head of Women's Department of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), Peng Wan-ju, proposed a resolution in 1997 that would nominate women to comprise at least a quarter of DPP candidates for local and national elections. Thereafter the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) also adopted a similar quota system for electoral nominations. After nearly two decades of taking positive actions to implement the quota system for nominating legislative candidates, the results have exceeded the 25 percent minimum. In 1998, elected female lawmakers comprised only 19 percent of the Legislative Yuan. By 2014, women legislators were 36.6 percent of the national legislature—one of the highest in Asia (Department of Gender Equality 2011; Ramzy 2015). Two years later, Taiwan became the first Chinese society to elect a female president, Dr. Tsai Ing-wen. Whereas virtually all female heads of states in Asia were from political families, Tsai has been a self-made politician whose family had not been involved in politics.

In retrospect, Tsai's electoral victory and the relatively high percentage of women lawmakers in Taiwan's legislature are culminations of nearly two decades of implementing the quota system for nominating qualified female electoral candidates to stand for elections. The passage of the CEDAW Enforcement Act in 2011 was the collective expression of Taiwanese lawmakers from all political parties to eliminate gender discrimination in the society based on the international standard codified in the 1979 UN Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) (Department of Gender Equality 2011). To enforce and monitor the implementation of this law, state feminists in CPWR actively lobbied for the creation of the Department of Gender Equality (DGE). In 2012, DGE was established as a ministerial-level cabinet. Whereas the CPWR consisted of part-time advisers who met several times annually, the DGE has a full-time paid staff charged with the formulation and dissemination of gender-sensitive policies. The DGE also monitors governmental departments and various sectors of Taiwanese society to ensure their compliance with gender-equality laws and policies. It publicizes best practices for eliminating gender biases in the family and the workplace and raises the general public's awareness of gender stereotypes perpetuated by traditional beliefs and the mass media (Kuo 2012).

## Education

Consistent with CEDAW's commitment to eliminating gender biases and stereotypes in school curricula and textbooks, the Awakening Foundation,<sup>2</sup> a leading feminist NGO in Taipei, conducted a comprehensive textual analysis of textbooks in Taiwan's national-education system. It found numerous instances of stereotypes of women and men playing traditional gender roles. A coalition of feminist NGOs and educational reformers, in 1994, pressured the Taiwanese government to create the Commission for Educational Reform. The ad hoc Commission consisted of government officials, scholar-experts, and educational reformers from the civil society. There was a broad consensus among educational reformers that the national educational system should be changed to enable students to think creatively and critically for a new competitive global economy rather than relying mainly on rote memorization of state-sponsored official knowledge to pass high-school and university entrance examinations that were primarily designed for training students to assume traditional roles in the society (Lee 2011).

In 1997, feminist activists both within and outside of the government apparatus, in coalition with parents' groups and educational reformers, ended five decades of the government's monopoly on the contents of elementary-school textbooks. With the government-civil society partnership, they successfully lobbied for the creation of the Commission for Gender-Equity Education to be housed in the Executive Yuan of the Taiwanese government. Consistent with the Platform for Action's commitment to eliminating gender stereotypes and mainstreaming of women's leadership in educational institutions, the Commission recommended revisions of textbooks to eliminate gender biases. Elementary-school teachers were given greater autonomy to choose textbooks. As diverse sectors of the civil society engaged in policy deliberation to dismantle the government's monopoly on education, the parents' groups, educational reformers, and feminist activists' civic engagement in the democratic deliberations for educational reform reflected characteristics of the transversal model of diversity mainstreaming.

Based on the proposed bill drafted by Taipei's feminist lawyers and educational reformers, the Legislative Yuan passed the Gender-Equity Education Act in 2004. The law stipulates that a

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<sup>2</sup> For more information about the Awakening Foundation, see <https://www.awakening.org.tw/>

gender-equity curriculum should be integrated into students' learning experiences from kindergarten to high school. Every university in Taiwan should offer courses in gender studies. The law prohibited discrimination against pregnant women and girls or any discriminatory treatment against sexual minorities in the school system. It also stipulates the creation of a Gender-Equity Education Committee in the Ministry of Education, in every city and county government and in every school and university in Taiwan, mandating that women should comprise at least half of all members in each committee. The Gender-Equity Education Committee in every level of government and school is charged with implementing gender-equity policies and coordinating gender-equity curriculum. The Committee in each school is also responsible for investigating cases of sexual misconduct on campus and for recommending appropriate punishment for offenders based on legal stipulations (Chang 2009a).

The progress made in the gender mainstreaming of educational institutions notwithstanding, gender stereotyping and assumptions still persist in determining many high-school graduates' preferences of certain majors in Taiwanese universities. According to the statistical data published by the Ministry of Education in 2011, women comprised 65 percent of university students majoring in education, 69 percent in humanities and fine arts, 61 percent in social sciences and business, and 71 percent in health professions and social work. Conversely, women comprised only 34 percent of students majoring in the natural/physical sciences and 14 percent of engineering students. Based on a comparative study conducted by Peng Yen-wen and others on the gender segregation of university campuses in Taiwan, South Korea, and Japan, horizontal segregation along the lines of females majoring in studies that pertain to service-oriented caring professions persists in all three East Asian countries. Conversely, science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields continue to be male-dominated. Among the three countries, only South Korea passed a law in 2002 specifically for fostering and supporting women in STEM fields. The Act mandated the appropriation of necessary resources, mentoring programs for women in STEM, and provided a comprehensive support system for recruiting and retaining women students, scientists, and engineers from secondary schools to Ph.D. programs and industries. Due to these policy initiatives, South Korea has had relatively better track record in recruiting female students to pursue degrees in STEM (Y.W. Peng, G. Kawano, E. Lee, L.L. Tsai, K. Takarabe, M. Yokoyama, H. Ohtsubo, and M. Ogawa 2017).

To recruit more women and girls into STEM fields, the Taiwanese government should take actions to implement similar laws and policy initiatives as their South Korean counterparts. In an effort to encourage more high-school girls to choose STEM fields as potential majors for their college education, Ministry of Education in Taiwan has already required that high-school teachers and school guidance counselors undergo gender-sensitivity training, so that students will be directed toward choosing fields of study based on their interest and aptitude rather than their gender (Department of Gender Equality 2013).

Another area where Taiwanese girls lagged behind boys has been in the arena of recreational and competitive sports. Based on statistics compiled by the Ministry of Education, elementary- and junior-high school girls in sports teams comprised only 62 percent of their male counterparts. In an effort to comply with the CEDAW Enforcement Act's commitment to gender parity in the participation of sports activities, the Taiwanese government, in 2014, certified more women sports referees as mentors of female students in competitive sports than previous years. Because of contemporary media's emphasis on thinness as a standard of feminine beauty, many Taiwanese girls rely on dieting rather than exercise as a way to stay thin. In order to steer adolescent girls toward healthy behavioral changes, all schools in Taiwan are now required to offer

health education that emphasizes a balanced diet, regular exercise, mental/physical wellness, and healthy body images. To prevent the spread of sexually transmitted diseases and unintended pregnancies among adolescents, sex education is also a required curriculum in Taiwan's public-school system. School teachers are provided with online learning tools and teaching resources on sex education to facilitate classroom instruction (Department of Gender Equality 2013).

In cases where adolescent girls are unwed single mothers with pre-school children, the Gender-Equity Education Act protects single mothers' right to complete their education. Taking a positive-action approach to meeting single mothers' special needs, the Ministry of Education has implemented flexible attendance and graduation policies for single mothers in public-schools and the university system (Ministry of Education 2014). In order to retain students until they complete their compulsory education, the Taiwanese government has provided financial assistance to abandoned pregnant girls as well as children from low-income, single parent, skip-generation, and aboriginal family backgrounds (Department of Gender Equality 2013).

Responding to the advocacy of several feminist leaders within the Taiwanese government, the Executive Yuan reached a consensus with the legislature, in partnership with feminist NGOs, to provide children in urban school districts with the necessary after-school programs in elementary schools. A feminist NGO in Taipei, the Wanru Foundation, was instrumental in providing resources for the training of homemakers in each neighborhood to serve as part-time caretakers of children in after-school programs. Because the government subsidizes the costs of childcare for some low-income families in after-school programs, working mothers from these families would not have to worry about hiring caretakers to keep an eye on their children before they get off from work (Lee 2014).

## Employment

Thus, the Taiwanese government, in partnership with feminist NGOs, has taken the positive-action approach to gender mainstreaming by appropriating limited resources to assist socioeconomically disadvantaged mothers and children in certain urban neighborhoods with targeted social programs. On the other hand, affordable childcare and eldercare have not been made universal enough in both urban and rural neighborhoods throughout Taiwan to facilitate most married women from working-class backgrounds to join or re-enter the workforce. The women's employment rate in Taiwan remained at 50.5 percent in 2013, which is higher than that of South Korea and Japan but lower than the United States (Commission for National Development 2014). According to the statistics released by the Ministry of Labor in 2015, Taiwanese women made 85 percent of men's wages for performing the same work, in comparison with 78 percent in the United States, 69 percent in South Korea, and 67 percent in Japan (Central News Agency 2015). Notwithstanding the smaller wage gap between Taiwanese men and women in comparison with other countries, Taiwanese women employed in medium sized and small businesses earned only 80 percent of the wages of their male counterparts for doing the same jobs, while nearly half of working women in Taiwan are employees of small-sized companies that have fewer than 30 workers (Yu 2015).

The employment rate is particularly low among working-class Taiwanese women over 45 years of age who did not receive a college degree. The 2014 Report of the Commission for National Development cited unfavorable working environment for middle-aged women, economic restructuring in Taiwan due to globalization, women's primary responsibilities in childcare and eldercare at home as major factors that contributed to some women's decision to opt out of

participating in paid work. As factories were outsourced to countries with lower wages than Taiwan from the 1990s onward, unskilled and semi-skilled workers of both genders were the most vulnerable to mass lay-offs. By contrast, college-educated middle-class professionals of both genders tended to be more insulated from the negative consequences of outsourcing and globalization. Though Taiwanese labor laws prohibit job discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, disabilities, appearances, age, and sexual identities, the small fines imposed on industries that violate job discrimination laws render their actual enforcement ineffectual. Studies show that younger workers of both genders have a higher probability of getting full-time jobs after a period of unemployment than their middle-aged working-class counterparts who sought to re-enter the workforce (Chen 2005; Chiao 2008). This example illustrates the intersectional oppression of class inequalities and age discrimination in middle-aged Taiwanese male and female workers' lives during the age of globalization.

Consistent with the resolution of the Platform for Action for supporting continuing education for women in all stages of life cycle and for women's reentry into the workforce, local governments in Taiwan have partnered with various NGOs to provide community-based vocational training for unemployed women and homemakers who wish to re-enter the workforce. Based on the agenda-setting/positive-actions approach to gender mainstreaming, local governments partnered with NGOs in the civil society to run community-based workshops in information-technology training to enhance women's computer literacy and online access (Ministry of Education 2014). The Ministry of Labor also works with local governments to provide free job training and job referral services to unemployed women, women with disabilities, single mothers, and victims of domestic violence. The local governments matched relevant vocational skills of particular women with job openings in the local economy. In some instances, the authorities paired up an unemployed woman with a position in a company that would require on-the-job training (Ministry of Labor 2014).

Notwithstanding the Taiwanese government's initiatives to provide job training for unemployed women, a survey of 1369 women in 2014 found that 61 percent were not familiar with the government's job training programs, 29 percent were satisfied with the government's initiative, while 10 percent were dissatisfied. Those who had a negative opinion mentioned that the government did not do enough to publicize the job training programs. Rather than training women in skills that would enable them to compete for higher-paying jobs, many programs only trained women in skills for a few types of female-dominated low-paying occupations. Lastly, the number of applicants admitted for the job training programs had been too small (Chien et al. 2014).

In response to the survey result, the scholar-experts who conducted the survey recommended that the government should reassess its budget for job training programs to see if there is a possibility for admitting more women applicants for job training. Instead of training women to work in occupations that do not require college degrees, curricula for continuing education and job training programs should also gear towards upgrading the professional skills and knowledge of college-educated women who left their jobs to take care of family members. In time, these women would be well equipped to be reintegrated into their professional life (Chien et al. 2014).

Based on the legal provisions of Taiwan's Gender Equality in Employment Act (2001), a parent is entitled to two years of unpaid leave to take care of an infant at home without the fear of dismissal upon his or her return to work. Moreover, women employees with newborns are eligible for two-months of maternity leave with full pay and six months of leave with partial pay if the employee has labor insurance. Despite the legal provisions, most female employees with newborns

did not choose the two-year unpaid leave option. Only about a third of women with children below the age of three applied for paid or unpaid parental leaves. Some of them did not have full confidence that the government would intervene on their behalf if their company were to give their jobs to other individuals during the duration of their parental leaves, while many women employees also could not afford to take two years of unpaid leaves (Chien et al. 2014).

While it could be too costly for the Taiwanese government or private companies to provide employees who apply for two years of parental leave with full pay, the government should at least mandate that companies provide workshops to educate and assure their employees of their rights and inform them of the legal channels they can pursue to file complaints if their rights were violated. To ensure that employees' rights are protected, the government should also enforce penalties with significant fines on companies that violate parental/family-leave policies.

Consistent with the Platform for Action's call for providing more work-life balance for working women, the Ministry of Labor provides financial subsidies to large companies that set up lactation rooms for breastfeeding and affordable childcare facilities that would accommodate female employees' work schedules. In compliance with the stipulations of the Gender Equality in Employment Act, over 80 percent of Taiwanese companies with 250 employees or more have created affordable childcare facilities (Ministry of Labor 2014). Yet the majority of Taiwanese women are employees of either medium-sized or small businesses. Many of these enterprises do not provide childcare facilities for their employees.

In an effort to implement the agenda stated in the Platform for Action, the Taiwanese government partnered with not-for-profit organizations and the private sector in each community to raise money for creating more affordable childcare and elder daycare facilities. That way, more women could re-enter the workforce. In response to the needs of the aging population for assisted living, the government in recent years has appropriated resources to train two thousand more nurses annually. Likewise, more social workers have been certified to assess the needs of disabled senior citizens in each community (Ministry of Public Health and Social Welfare 2014).

Despite the limited progress made in setting up the infrastructure for children's daycare and eldercare, the fact that Taiwanese women's employment rate is only 51 percent can be attributed to the shortage of affordable childcare and elder daycare facilities in many communities throughout Taiwan. Some women opted to take care of their family members full-time by themselves, because they do not have enough confidence in the quality of these daycare facilities. Over the years, some of the privately run daycare centers, in order to cut costs and increase the profit margins, opted to hire caretakers/teachers without prerequisite certifications. Yet the authorities have not done enough to crack down on these hiring practices. Because of the strict criteria for receiving eldercare services from the government, only about one-third of elderly population in Taiwan received them. Most of these recipients have some form of mental/physical disabilities (Ministry of Public Health and Social Welfare 2014).

Due to the social stigma associated with sending elderly parents to nursing homes in Taiwan, many middle-class households chose to hire female guest workers from Southeast Asia to care for their elderly disabled parents at home. For those households that could not afford to hire full-time caretakers, daughters or daughters-in-law would generally assume the roles of primary caretakers. This gender-specific responsibility at home has had an adverse effect on working-class women's prospect for re-entering the workforce. To facilitate low-income women's re-entry into the workforce, several state feminists have proposed the training of more caretaking professionals and the creation of more affordable childcare and eldercare facilities in residential areas with partnerships between the government and non-profit organizations. But because of the

strong opposition from for-profit daycare centers against the government's creation of not-for-profit childcare and eldercare centers, state feminists' vision for universal availability of low-cost daycare centers has not yet been realized (Lee 2014). Consequently, working-class women are still more likely to quit their jobs to be full-time caretakers at home than middle-class women, because the former often could not afford to send their children to daycare centers or hire guest workers to take care of their elderly parents. This problem further exacerbates income inequalities between double-income middle-class households and single-income working-class families in contemporary Taiwan (Yu 2015).

Taking the positive-actions approach to integrating more middle-aged unemployed women and homemakers into the workforce, the Taiwanese government appropriated resources to empower some of these women to launch their own small businesses. Based on the recommendation made by the UN Platform for Action, the Taiwanese government provides micro-loans to qualified middle-aged women and pairs them up with experienced mentors to guide them through the process of setting up small businesses (Ministry of Labor 2014; Commission for National Development's Report 2014). Among the Malayo-Polynesian aborigines who comprise 2 percent of Taiwanese population, half of all recipients of small business loans in 2014 were women. Taking into account indigenous women's experiences of confronting the intersectional oppression of poverty, gender discrimination, and ethnic prejudice by the Han Chinese majority, the Commission for Indigenous Peoples, a cabinet-level department within the Executive Yuan of Taiwanese government, created a mentoring program to assist aboriginal women in launching their own businesses. In order to alleviate aboriginal women's double burden of household responsibilities and paid work, the Commission partnered with Christian churches in indigenous communities to create affordable childcare facilities and daytime eldercare centers (Commission for Indigenous People 2014).

In an effort to break the cycle of poverty in indigenous communities, Commission of Indigenous Peoples appropriated funds to 15 county and municipal governments to create 15 tribal universities. The mission of the tribal universities is to provide continuing education and vocational training to women and men in the preservation of indigenous cultures and languages, management of hot springs for generating tourism revenues for indigenous businesses, conservation of forests and natural resources on tribal lands, economic development based on indigenous handicraft industries, production and sales of agricultural products, and courses in financial and computer literacy using online resources. Because some women in these tribal communities had more free time than their male counterparts, women comprised 70 percent of students in the tribal universities. Some of them applied the vocational and management skills they acquired in the universities to launch their own businesses or assume leadership positions in their respective tribal communities (Commission for Indigenous People's Report 2014).

### **Conclusion and Policy Recommendations**

Since the late 1990s, political parties in Taiwan have been effective in implementing policies of gender mainstreaming to increase the percentage of women candidates during electoral campaigns. Currently, women comprise more than a third of lawmakers elected to serve in Taiwan's Legislature Yuan. The creation of the Department of Gender Equality in 2012 also marked the first step toward the recruitment, training, and professionalization of a department staffed with full-time experts equipped with the knowledge for gender mainstreaming.

To raise gender consciousness among civil servants in all levels of Taiwanese government, conscious-raising for gender equity should be integrated into the contents of all personnel training workshops rather than requiring most civil servants to attend gender-sensitivity trainings for merely a couple of hours annually. With the positive-actions approach's overemphasis on the use of pro-women quota system and social programs to close the gender gap, the government has not yet incorporated gender-sensitive perspectives into all aspects of its policy-making, nor has it envisioned new policies that could fundamentally transform gender relationships, gender roles, and gender segregation in the workforce (Peng et al. 2015).

As in most industrialized societies, one area of gender inequality in Taiwanese society has been the horizontal segregation of women and men along occupational lines. Given the lack of progress made in encouraging more girls to major in the STEM fields, the Ministry of Education should strongly recommend that high-school teachers and guidance counselors regularly communicate with parents whose daughters excel in mathematics and the sciences to encourage them to pursue studies and careers in STEM. If the Taiwanese government, in partnership with financial donors from the civil society, were to offer more scholarships to pay for the tuition and living expenses of women students majoring in STEM fields in universities, this program could potentially reverse the cycle of male dominance in these fields.

To meet the financial needs of working-class families whose wage earners were laid off due to outsourcing of their factory jobs abroad, the various types of jobs created through government-civil society collaboration should pay a living wage that could sustain a decent standard of living (Chen 2005; Chien et al. 2014). Based on the transversal diversity approach to mainstreaming that takes into account ordinary citizens' input for policy formulation, Taiwanese government should commission a study that comprehensively survey unemployed women and homemakers who wish to re-enter the workforce, so that it can gauge what types of occupational training these women would like to receive.

With the aging of the Taiwanese population, caretaking tasks in middle-class households and eldercare centers are often delegated to female guest workers from Southeast Asia. In the age of globalization, this social phenomenon illustrates the socioeconomic inequalities along the lines of gender, class, and nationality in Taiwanese society (Lee 2004). For those working-class families who could not afford to hire a full-time guest worker or send their children/elderly to daycare centers, there is an urgent need for the government to step up its partnerships with NGOs to expand affordable not-for-profit eldercare and childcare facilities in each community, so that women would not have to leave the workforce to care for their family members.

Applying the transversal approach to diversity mainstreaming, state feminists in the Taiwanese government have organized citizens' forums to solicit opinions from ordinary women in order to gauge the needs of women from diverse backgrounds. The government should also facilitate other marginalized populations' grass-roots participation in town hall meetings, so that sexual minorities, new immigrants, aboriginal communities, the disabled and senior citizens can offer their perspectives on policy reforms to the government through a deliberative democratic process. It is only through the inclusion of marginalized perspectives from various disadvantaged populations that policies can be reformulated to address intersectional inequalities and injustices in society.

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