

Achievements of the Project for Promotion of Men's Participation in Gender Equality by the Taipei City Government

Author: Department of Social Welfare, Taipei City Government

Address: 5F, No. 15, Section 5, Xinyi Road, 11049 (Xinyi Administration Center)

Tel: 02-27208889 ext. 1981

I. Background: Men Also Need Gender Equality

The world started trying to improve women's status on the 1st World Conference on Women held Washington D.C., the United States in 1888. The Commission on the Status of Women was further founded in 1946 by the United Nations to advocate equality for women as compared to men through the UN systems. With joint effort from country governments, women's rights and status received more attention and were gradually improved. Women's education level and their labor participation rate were upped as they were emancipated from traditional gender roles. Today, women enjoy more freedom and room for imagination when it comes to building their lifestyles.

In times like this, however, men are still kidnapped by gender stereotypes. The traditional thinking of "men make houses, women make homes" demands men to shoulder the entire family's financial burdens. Under pressure, they are often deprived of their right to bond and interact with their family members as much as their female counterparts do. The 2009 Survey of Children and Youth Living Conditions in Taipei City shows that the city's children and teenagers, on average, spend 3.42 hours with their mothers per day. Yet the average time they spend with their father is as little as 2.61 hours. The majority of children and teens think they "often chat with mothers," but only "have mutual respect with fathers." Children learn to confirm their gender roles through everyday experiences. With their fathers spending much less time with them than mothers and their relationships with fathers much colder, it is no wonder that gender stereotypes are still being passed down to the next generation.

Women's rights activists have therefore come to realize that, to reach gender equality, in addition to women's empowerment, men's participation and adjustments to their roles are equally important. Article 25 of the Beijing Declaration, the 4th World Conference on Women, 1995, encourages "men to participate fully in all actions towards equality."

The Taipei Association for the Promotion of Women's Rights (hereafter abbreviated as the TAPWR) was established by the Taipei City Government in 1996. The first government-founded organization highly participated by public members, it led women's rights advocacy in the country to a whole new level, and secured a new participatory democracy model for such advocacy. The association's mission is to review gender policies by the Taipei City Government (hereafter referred to as "the Government") and make sure such policies are truly helpful to promoting gender equality. In 2005, the 5th TAPWR members launched the Special Team for Gender Mainstreaming to work on gender statistics gathered from the Government's bureaus and departments. Between 2006 and 2007, gender mainstreaming tools for the Government were developed. From 2007 to 2010, the Gender Mainstreaming Project for All Public Agencies of the Taipei City was formed. Another project entitled the *General Project for Encouraging All Public Agencies under the Taipei City Government to Make Gender Mainstreaming Plans by the TCG* was formulated between 2011 and 2014. From "promotion of women's rights" to "gender mainstreaming," we (the Government) have been thinking how we could encourage men to take part in gender equality actions and change their gender stereotypes, so that men can also enjoy the fruitful results of the gender equality movement.

II. The Process: Diverse Fatherhood, Learned from Other Cultures

Subsidized by the Government, commissioner of the Taipei Association for the Promotion of Women's Rights Ku Yen-ling attended the NGO-CSW (Non Government Organizations -Commission on the Status of Women) Forum held by the UN in 2009. The expert panel meeting of that year shed light on "the equal sharing of

responsibilities between women and men, including care-giving in the context of HIV and AIDS.” Commissioner Ku brought back precious information shared by Norwegian participants, and proposed that “changes to men’s roles and the equal sharing of responsibilities” should be the key missions of the TAPWR’s Special Team for Women’s Support Networks. After four special team seminars and three general meetings, as well as 18 months of brainstorming, discussions, research, negotiations, idea exchange and communications, finally, in 2011, the “Project for the Promotion of Men’s Participation in Gender Equality Actions: Encouraging Men to Develop a Diverse Father’s Role by the Taipei City Government” (hereafter referred to as “the Project”) was put into practice.

During the course, we realized that family is a crucial field for passing down and cultivating of gender awareness, and that gender stereotypes are deeply affected by family values. Seeking gender equality in family then became the most important issue for us.

Many studies have confirmed that, once men give up on their fatherly authority and the conventional image of a stern father, and try to express their feelings and cultivate their ability to show care as they educate their children, they will feel more achieved as a father. This will not only help to increase the diversity and importance of the father’s role in family, but also combat traditional values and promote gender balance.

As aforementioned, although men may play various different roles in society, such as son, student, co-worker, husband, father, and company supervisor, according to the traditional gender division of labor, they feel the most strongly restrained by the father’s role, for there are strict rules to follow. To encourage men to take part in gender equality actions, the Taipei City Government set out to break structural barriers and increase the diversity of the father’s role. It is hoped that, with time, men’s such traditional role will be viewed more differently by society, men’s pressure from playing a father will be eased, and more ways of playing a father will be

acknowledged. Let's not make men miss their chance to interact with their family members, and instead encourage them to increase their participation as a parent in the family. Again, let's invite men to work for gender equality and share the fruitful results.

III. The Plan: Identify Project Levels and Build Strategies

Since the Project is different from the classical idea of "improving women's rights to attain gender equality," brand-new strategies were needed. We set the target content by two parts, "eliminating men's gender stereotypes" and "encouraging men to develop a more diverse father's role." Both were to be practiced at the same time and be complementary to one another. We first analyzed the present circumstances through gender statistics and related research, so as to identify the problems and goals. Then, we made feasible plans on personal, systematic and socio-cultural levels, which were jointly carried out by the Department of Social Welfare, Department of Education, Department of Labor, Department of Health, Department of Civil Affairs, Department of Cultural Affairs, and Department of Information and Tourism of the Taipei City Government. Project content is as listed below in Figure 1.

Figure 1 A Brief List of Content of the Project for Promotion of Men's Participation in Gender Equality, Taipei City Government

General Goals		Level	Sub-Goals	Strategies
Eliminate Men's Gender Stereotypes	Promote Gender Equality on Campus	Personal	Promote the roles of male caregivers during student learning activities held by municipal kindergartens.	Starting with nursery and kindergarten, add examples of male caregivers to teaching materials (for instance, a father who tell stories to children.)
			Improve gender awareness of nursery and kindergarten teachers.	Arrange gender awareness classes to enhance education experts' such ability.
		Systematic	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Encourage teachers and students of all education levels to more actively participate in educational events on gender equality, so as to break gender stereotypes and promote the idea of "everyone should share housework and caregiving responsibilities with their family members." 2. Ask schools to practice Gender Equity Education Act and launch educational events on gender equality. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Hold various creative campus activities on gender equality. 2. Establish an assessment plan.

	Advocate Gender Equality to the Public	Personal	Encourage interactions between the domestic service and medical care markets and provide more such work opportunities to both women and men. Offer quality service labor to needed clients, too.	Encourage men to work as caregivers, such as day care staff, nursery and kindergarten teachers and domestic caregivers, and promote men's such and other new roles to eliminate gender stereotypes.
			Hold housework and cooking classes to encourage men to share household responsibilities.	Offer housework and cooking classes with the city's women's centers, or subsidize private groups to perform this mission, so as to encourage men to participate more in housework and cooking.
		Systematic	Include gender equality in cultural events and promote such events. Establish a platform on which the government and private arts and non-profit groups may exchange ideas.	Advocate gender equality in the city through cultural events.
			Preview and review media content to avoid spreading gender stereotypes to the public. Promote gender equality to media, too, to enhance the public's gender awareness together.	Produce short films and publish books and pamphlets to correct wrong gender concepts. Also, review advocacy ads by all city departments and bureaus, and identify media violations of the rights of victims of sexual violence.

		Socio-cultural	Change people's old view that caregiving must be provided by women.	Encourage men to work as caregivers, such as child care providers, nursery and kindergarten teachers, and domestic caregivers. Advertise non-conventional, exemplary roles to eliminate gender stereotypes.
			Encourage men to be caregivers so that women and men may more equally share responsibilities.	Arrange events to promote men's participation in caregiving.
Men	Shape a Diverse Father's role and Equally Share Responsibilities between Women and Men	Preparation and Things to Learn before Building a New Family	Personal	<p>Ask local household registration offices to provide free publications on gender equality when newlyweds register their marriage, so as to improve citizens' gender awareness.</p> <p>To encourage the equal sharing of responsibilities between men and women, publish books and pamphlets to promote the following information:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mutual respect between women and men. 2. Equal sharing of housework and be considerate to one another. 3. Financial independence be enjoyed by both sides. Housework has a price. 4. Run the family in a sustainable way. 5. Prevent domestic violence. 6. Encourage the husband and the wife to cook together.

			Assist the public in learning potential marital problems and how to solve them.	Offer pre-marriage courses on emotion management and self-care, and advocate gender equality.
		Personal & Cultural	Through long-term promotion plans like “Love Me 515,” encourage people to express love and care for family members, and refuse indifference to grow in households.	On Family Day, invite people to swap roles in the family, as a way to improve gender equality.
	Participate in the Family More Diversely as a Father		Ask schools to encourage both parents to attend Parents’ Day, or assist parents in learning more of children’s activities at school through the “parent-teacher notebook” or by phone.	Encourage both parents to take part teacher-parent meetings.
		Personal	Provide single-father family info to needed male public members as they go through divorce or widower registration procedures, so that they know where and how to ask for related welfare services	Print books and pamphlets for single-father families. The publications should include information on: 1. Counseling service for divorced men or widowers. 2. Support service for single-father families.
			Improve men’s understanding of infant and young child care and their level of participation.	Encourage men to participate more in infant and young child care with the Health Collection Card.

		Systematic	Encourage clinics and hospitals in the city to invite husbands to attend prenatal appointments with their wives.	Ask hospitals and clinics to specify that “both the husband and the wife may attend the wife’s prenatal visits.”
			Add information for would-be fathers in pregnancy health pamphlets.	Rename the traditional “Pamphlet for Mothers” as “Pamphlet for Parents,” and add more content for would-be fathers to learn.
			Provide more evening and holiday obstetrician services at hospitals and clinics.	Provide more evening prenatal appointments, so that the spouse can attend the appointments more.
		Personal & Systematic	1. Increase fathers’ willingness to accompany their babies or young children to receive vaccination. 2. Increase fathers’ will to take care of their babies or young children.	Ask the companion of a vaccine-receiving infant or young child to fill out both the father’s and mother’s information.
			Socio-cultural & systematic	Truly practice the Act of Gender Equality in Employment by actively building a gender-friendly and equality-based work culture. Eliminate gender discrimination and make sure all enterprises are truly fair and just in gender issues.

		Encourage companies to actively practice the Act of Gender Equality in Employment, provide a gender-friendly workplace, and eliminate gender discrimination. True equality is the ultimate aim.	Implement a gender-friendly workplace certification system. Assessment standards may include the Act of Gender Equality in Employment. Encouragement may also be given to employers.
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IV. Results: Promotion, Development and Encouragement

In “eliminating men’s gender stereotypes,” this project emphasized the promotion and strengthening of related concepts. In “encouraging men to take part in the family as a father more diversely,” various measures were taken to provide incentives for men to do so. We have hoped to loosen the present system through positive and harmless means.

1. Eliminate Men’s Gender Stereotypes

(1) Promote Gender Equality Education on Campus

From kindergarten, elementary school to high school, we made sure that schools at different levels promote gender equality. For instance, on public and private kindergarten principals’ meetings, we would encourage them to keep holding parenthood events and mentioning male caregivers in class activities or teaching materials. We also held a parenthood speech entitled “Philosophies of Super Dads on Raising Children” at the Taipei City Childcare Resource Center. At the speech, some parents were invited to share their experiences in fatherhood, parenthood and housework distribution. At elementary schools, there was a “gender equality month” on which creative drama, curriculum design, writing composition and photography contests were held. At high schools, gender equality was integrated into Chinese language, history, career planning, business management, and even food processing courses. Case study sessions were held when a school term was over.

(2) Promote Gender Equality to the Public

As to gender equality promotion for the general public, we made a good use of the Taipei City Government's current media resources, including a monthly journal entitled Discover Taipei, metro newspaper Upaper, Radio Taipei, and various cinema theatres, public televisions, outdoor electric bulletin boards, metro LED displays, and metro platform TVs. Using short films, special reports, articles, interviews and thematic speeches, we advocated gender equality in every corner of the city to our citizens in everyday life.



“Equal Housework Sharing Makes Happiness an Easy Task,” an LED display in the Taipei Metro. New ideas are spread little by little as such. (Photographed on May 5, 2012 at the Taipower Building station.)

The results are: A 30-second short film on “promoting the adjustment of the traditional father’s role and the sharing of caregiving tasks between men and women,”

an LED advertisement with the slogan of “Equal Housework Sharing Makes Happiness an Easy Task,” a poster of “Gender Equality: New Housework Distribution for Men,” an advocacy illustration which “Sets Minds Free, Breaks Gender Traps” as published by Discover Taipei, and special reports like “Let’s Do Housework Together: A Diverse Fatherhood Brings More Happiness” and “This Stylish Handsome Man in My House is Excellent at Housework.” A program “Happiness in Taipei” hosted by Radio Taipei also produced serial interviews aiming to break workplace gender stereotypes in 2012, including “A Male Nurse’s School-Day Memories,” “Story of a Male Long-term Caregiver as He Gave up His Old Career,” “How A Man Learns to be a Nursery Teacher,” and “Why Did I Choose to Be a Childcare Provider.” Gender equality experts were also invited to the radio station to share their thoughts through everyday topics, such as New Year customs, wedding customs, Olympics, children’s toys, etc. The subject is serious, yet the approach is highly accessible and close to life. In this way we were able to react to the goal of “eliminating men’s gender stereotypes.”

2. Shape a Diverse Father’s Role & Equal Sharing of Responsibilities between Men and Women

(1) Preparation and Things to Learn before Building a New Family

Based on a child’s birth, we divided men’s roles into two groups, the ones before they build a family of their own, and after they have become someone’s father, to plan needed measures for men. For the former, we distributed marriage pamphlet “Happy People, Happy Homes,” which contains gender equality advocacy materials, when a husband and a wife registers their marriage at a household registration office. At family education centers, pre-marriage courses on emotional management and self-care were also given. Gender equality ideas were promoted along. “Gender Vision” activity was held at the city’s women’s centers to screen *Mr. Housewife*. Post-screening talks were held to discuss men’s roles in the family and to break gender myths and traditions.

(2) Participate in the Family More Diversely as a Father

As to helping men to become a father who participates in the family more diversely, we asked schools to invite both parents to attend School Day and Parents' Day, as a way to promote gender equality and the equal sharing of family responsibilities. A letter was also sent to the Health Promotion Administration, Ministry of Health and Welfare to include information for fathers-to-be in the Pregnancy Health Pamphlet. Our request was accepted, and from 2012 on such information has been contained.

More importantly, measures must be carried out in different places to encourage men to participate more in the family as a father through more diverse aspects. As far as medical institutions are concerned, the health care centers and hospital branches in the 12 districts of Taipei were asked to continue holding health promotion activities, such as prenatal educational classes for would-be parents and breast feeding support events. Such activities were included in the "Citizen Health Collection Card," meaning that by attending the activities citizens could get a few points for free services like health checks at municipal hospitals. Labor-wise, we carried out the "Gender-friendly Workplace Assessment" in conjunction with the Council of Labor Affairs under the Executive Yuan. To ensure every worker has a happy, friendly place to work, we encouraged companies to value their staff's "happiness at work" in addition to providing a safe and harmonious work environment. The staff members, in turn, were encouraged to strike a balance between work and family for a better quality of life. In this way, the companies and their employees shall be able to give back more, economically and socially. "Taipei City CSR Award" was also founded to give public acknowledgement through a "star-rating" scheme (from 1 up to 3 stars) to dedicated enterprises. The 3-star enterprises were further awarded with the "Promoter of Happiness" Award, to encourage employers to build a friendly and fair workspace. A forum entitled "My Ideal Company" was held in 2012 to encourage public discussions on this topic, raise company workers' awareness of "happiness at work," and demand that more social responsibilities be taken by companies. "2012 Taipei CSR Publication" was published to demonstrate exemplary companies so that more can

follow along to create happy and friendly work environments.

V. Future Prospects: When the Seeds of Gender Equality Grow

Historical backgrounds and socio-economic structures can cast gender stereotypes on people, and even influence the people's actions. Hence, since 1888, women's groups around the world have been working to improve women's rights. Now that "equality" becomes a universal value, "gender equality" stands out even more as a crucial issue for all mankind. Catching up with this trend, the Taipei City Government has been trying to build a new path for gender equality, so as to encourage men to participate more in likewise actions. For true gender equality is not only about improving women's rights, but also about emancipating all from fixed frameworks. One's rights to choose a way of life should never be restricted by gender or sexual orientation.

We expect men to play more diverse roles in their families other than being the bread winners. We hope to see them enjoy the family tie as they interact with family members, just like women do. We also expect young boys to be allowed the freedom to choose their majors in the near future, instead of science-related subjects alone. Work wise, we hope to see them become nurses, kindergarten teachers, or long-term care givers as they like.

There is still a long way to go before we can finally attain true gender equality. It is perhaps difficult to fundamentally change the social mindset in a short period of time. Yet with continuous effort, we shall eventually find sprouts of change, and see them grow flowers and bear fruits some day. Much gratitude is paid to the Taipei Association for the Promotion of Women's Rights' present and former members, who have dedicated to advocating gender equality in this city and generously shared their wisdom. Appreciation must also be given to the Executive Yuan, for rewarding us with the 11th Gender Mainstreaming Award in acknowledgement of our hard work and humble achievements.