

Gender Mainstreaming and Gender Budgeting: Achievements, Gaps and Challenges

Country Paper of Japan for the 2nd Meeting of the ASEAN+3 Committee on Women

1. Introduction

The Country Paper of Japan is about efforts toward Gender Mainstreaming in Japan.

The Specialist Committee on Monitoring and Gender Impact Assessment and Evaluation, established under the Council for Gender Equality, one of the Japanese Government's Important Councils, conducts gender analyses on broad measures by the Japanese government. Based on the analysis results, the Committee proposes to the Prime Minister and the Ministers policies to promote the formation of the gender-equal society

Although we do not call this process "gender responsive budgeting," we regard this as an effort similar to gender responsive budgeting in concept.

2. Our understanding of "Gender Mainstreaming" and "Gender Responsive Budgeting"

Our understanding of "gender mainstreaming" matches Paragraph 13 of the Beijing Declaration: "Women's full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society, including participation in the decision-making process and access to power."

In respect to "gender responsive budgeting.", UNIFEM (United Nations Development Fund for Women), which will soon become known as UN-WOMEN, explains "gender-responsive budgeting" seeks to ensure that the collection and allocation of public resources is carried out in ways that are effective and contribute to advancing gender equality and women's empowerment."

Our understanding of gender-responsive budgeting matches this phrase. To be more concrete, we have the view "gender responsive budgeting" is the effort to connect the review of policies with budget allocation based on gender budget

analysis and its results.

3. Our Scheme

Japan's scheme for gender mainstreaming will be explained next from both legal and structural perspectives.

First introduced is the legal scheme. The Basic Act for a Gender-equal Society was enacted in 1999 with the aim of creating a gender-equal society. The Basic Act determines five principles and roles of each actors (State, local governments, and citizens.) The government is required to make special considerations to ensure that every system and practice remains neutral toward men and women. It also obliges to establish Basic Plan for Gender Equality in order to comprehensively and systematically implement policies related to promotion of formation of a gender-equal society, and to make research for the effect of government policies on formation of gender equal society.

The government formulates a basic plan every five years, based on the Basic Act. Important measures to be taken by the government over the next five years are showed in the basic plan. Currently, the government is drafting the third Basic Plan for Gender Equality, which will be approved by the Cabinet towards the end of this year. The third plan will explicitly include “males”, “children” and “poverty” as measurement subjects for the first time. Also for the first time, “gender responsive budgeting” will be explicitly touched upon. We will investigate efforts made by various countries in order to consider how our efforts should be redefined under the concept of gender responsive budgeting.

Next introduced is the framework of the National Machinery, which is designed to promote gender mainstreaming. The Council for Gender Equality conducts impact assessment and makes policy proposal to the related ministers.

4. Our Example

Details so far introduced will be explained next, taking examples from the report on Monitoring and Gender Impact Assessment and Evaluation

released in 2009 and opinions for relevant ministers based on the report.

The report theme was “Actual Situation of Men and Women Facing Living Difficulties in the Context of New Trends in the Economy and Society”

4-1. Gender Impact Assessment

First, we found in our measurement of economic difficulties by gender. The relative poverty rate of women is higher than that of men in almost all age groups, and the disparity between men and women becomes wider as they age.

In our measurement of economic difficulties by household type, single elderly women aged 65 or over, women in single-parent households, and children in mother-child households show higher poverty rates.

As in mother-child households, father-child households also have various difficulties in their daily lives, but their situations are different from those of mother-child households. While mother-child households have greater difficulties especially with rather economic factors such as “family budget,” “work” and “residences,”, “housework” in their independent daily lives marks the higher percentage in father-child households.

In a more detailed analysis of the economic difficulties of mother-child households, approximately 85% of mothers work. However, many of them work in unstable employment situations, such as temporary workers or part-timers. In such conditions, mother-child households’ annual average income from employment is approximately 2.13 million yen, much lower than that of father-child households’ which is approximately 4.21 million yen average.

Among OECD countries, we find the feature of Japan that poverty rate of single-parent households marks high despite relative poverty rate of entire households is not so high. Especially, the poverty rate of working single-parent households marks high compared to other OECD countries. It could be said that this consequence comes from the fact many of working single-parent households are mother-child household.

Another significant issue is that such difficult situations may have a domino effect on our children's generation. As we see the situations that educational cost per one child differs substantially by annual household income, it is reported it effects on a child's academic background. Issues that educational opportunities should be provided for children of all families and the chain of poverty to the next generation should be cut are major challenge along with the poverty among women.

4-2. Policy Report

Based on the Assessment results mentioned so far, the Council for Gender Equality decided to propose opinions in the following three categories to the Prime Minister and Ministers as measures to be taken by each ministry.

1. Measures for stabilizing employment (improvement for the employment situation of women especially mothers of single-parent households suffering poverty even with work.).
2. Measures for supporting for independence of single-parent households.
3. Measures for breaking the chain of living difficulties to the next generation.

First, to “stabilize employment”, measures are needed to:

- Strengthen the ban on gender discrimination stipulated in the Equal Employment Opportunity Law.
- Provide a safety net (unemployment insurance, social insurance, and so on) for non-regular workers.
- Realize equal remuneration in respect of work of equal value.

Then, to “support for independence of single-parent households”:

- Provide comprehensive support for mothers in single-parent households, such as support for employment and for living independence.
- Formulate measures that take into account the difficulty of living independence of father-child households and their isolation in local

community.

Finally introduced are measures to “break the chain of living difficulties to the next generation”.

- Support continued employment and re-employment of women in order to lower the poverty risk of working-parents households.
- Take measures to reduce the burden of education costs in order to secure educational opportunities for children of all families.

The progress statuses of these measures are currently being monitored. A future issue is to ensure that the PDCA process follows for these measures.