

Framework

for the Promotion of Gender Equality

Basic Law for a Gender-equal Society

The Basic Law for a Gender-equal Society was promulgated and enacted in June 1999.

The Basic Law provides five basic principles for the realization of a gender-equal society, and stipulates the roles of the State, local governments and citizens for their respective responsibilities.

5 Basic Principles

1 Respect for the Human Rights of Women and Men

It is necessary to respect the dignity of women and men as individuals, to abolish gender-based discrimination, and to secure opportunities for women and men to exercise their abilities as individuals.

2 Consideration to Social Systems or Practices

It is necessary to consider the modification of social systems or practices so that women and men can take part in various social activities, being free from the stereotyped perception of gender roles.

3 Joint Participation in Planning and Deciding Policies

It is necessary to secure opportunities in which both men and women can participate in the decision making of various policies as equal partners in society.

4 Compatibility of Activities in Family Life and Other Activities

It is necessary to enable men and women to act as equal family members, while cooperating with each other, receiving support from society, and fulfilling their role in the family, and to work and take part in learning and to participate in activities in local communities.

5 International Cooperation

It is important to move forward together with international society to create a gender-equal society. It is necessary to make efforts in cooperation with other countries and international organizations.

Responsibilities of the State, Local Governments and Citizens

- The State shall, based on the basic principles, formulate and implement comprehensive measures for the formation of a gender-equal society, including the formulation of the Basic Plan for Gender Equality and positive action.
- Local governments shall, corresponding to national measures, implement the measures for the formation of a gender-equal society based on the basic principles and shall develop measures in accordance with the nature of the local community.
- Citizens are expected to cooperate in the formation of a gender-equal society.

Basic Plan for Gender Equality

On December 12, 2000, the Cabinet decided the Basic Plan for Gender Equality, the first plan based upon the Basic Law for a Gender-equal Society.

The Basic Plan carries 11 priority objectives, and describes the basic direction of government policies up until 2010, and concrete measures to be implemented by the end of FY2005.

11 Priority Objectives

- 1 Expand women's participation in policy decision-making processes
- 2 Review social systems and practices, and reform awareness from a gender-equal perspective
- 3 Provide equal job opportunities and working conditions both for men and women
- 4 Achieve gender equality in rural areas
- 5 Support the efforts of men and women to harmonize work with their family and community life
- 6 Develop conditions that allow the elderly to live with peace of mind
- 7 Eliminate all forms of violence against women
- 8 Support life-long health for women
- 9 Respect women's human rights in the media
- 10 Enrich education and learning programs that promote gender equality and facilitate diversity choice
- 11 Contribute to the "Equality, Development and Peace" of the global community.

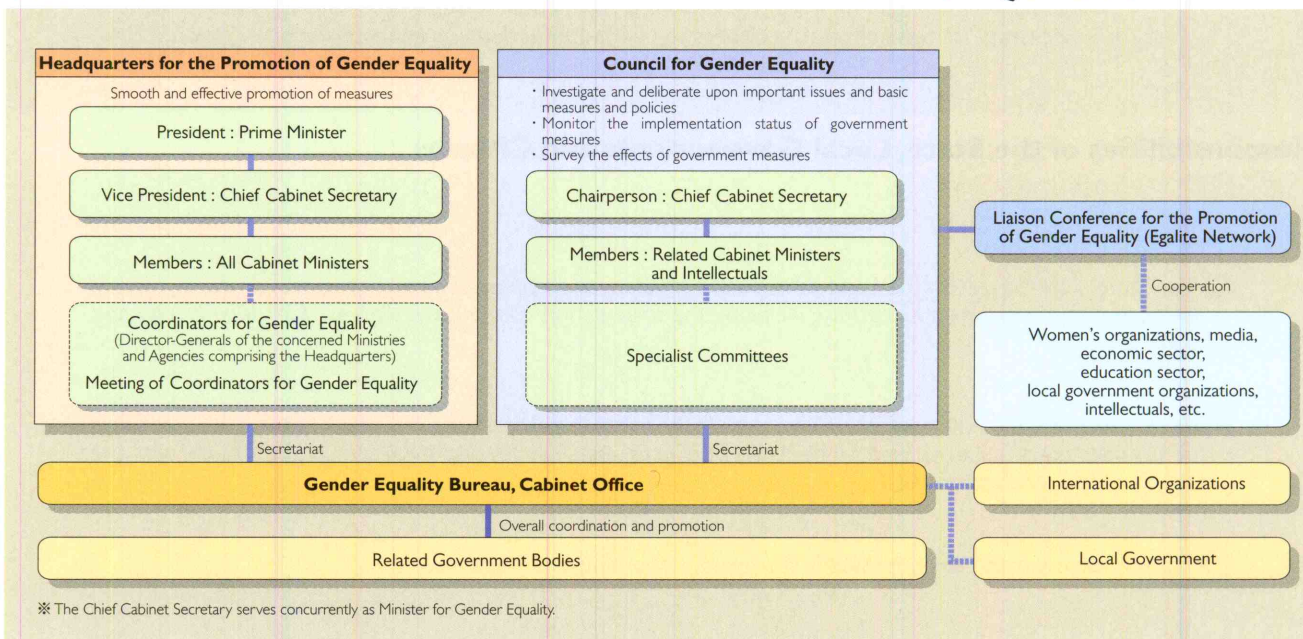
Prefectural governments need to draw up their gender-equality plan based on the Basic Plan. Municipalities are also expected to prepare their gender equality plan by using the Gender Equality Basic Plan and prefectural gender equality plan as reference documents.

The Japanese government will develop a new Basic Plan by the end of FY2005. Currently, the Council for Gender Equality examines basic philosophies that will be incorporated in a new Basic Plan.

National Machinery for the Promotion of the Formation of a Gender-equal Society

Since January 2001, the national machinery for the promotion of gender equality in Japan has been enhanced and strengthened, by establishing the Council for Gender Equality and Gender Equality Bureau.

NATIONAL MACHINERY FOR THE PROMOTION OF GENDER EQUALITY



Headquarters for the Promotion of Gender Equality

The Headquarters for the Promotion of Gender Equality (hereinafter referred to as "Headquarters") was established for the smooth and effective promotion of measures regarding the formation of a gender-equal society. The Prime Minister serves as the president of the Headquarters, and the Chief Cabinet Secretary serves as vice president. It comprises all cabinet ministers, and high level government officials such as director general of the member ministries/ agencies are appointed by the president, as coordinators for gender equality. A meeting of coordinators for gender equality is held for mutual cooperation between member ministries/agencies.

Gender Equality Bureau

The Gender Equality Bureau of the Cabinet Office has the function as the secretariat for the Headquarters and the Council for Gender Equality. It undertakes planning and overall coordination of various matters related to the promotion of the formation of a gender-equal society.

Moreover, it compiles the "Annual Report on the State of Formation of a Gender-equal Society" (white paper), undertakes studies and research, publicizes and promotes the Basic Law for a Gender-equal Society, enlightens the public about the Law, and cooperates with local governments, NGOs, and international organizations.

Liaison Conference for the Promotion of Gender Equality (Egalite Network)

The Liaison Conference for the Promotion of Gender Equality, formed from experts in all sectors of society, undertakes activities towards the realization of a gender-equal society, such as widespread provision of information and opinion exchange.

Council for Gender Equality

The Council for Gender Equality is chaired by the Chief Cabinet Secretary and comprises 12 cabinet ministers designated by the Prime Minister and 12 intellectuals appointed by the Prime Minister.

The Council has the following specialist committees.

Council for Gender Equality and its specialist committees

Specialist Committee on Basic Issues

This Committee studies and deliberates basic perceptions of gender equality as well as other important matters that are of great concern to people and closely related to the basic perceptions to gender equality.

The Specialist Committee has issued the following reports:

"Interim Report on Deliberations on a System that Gives a Married Couple an Option to Retain Separate Surnames" (October 2001), and "Measures to Support Women's Challenges" (April 2003).

Specialist Committee on Violence against Women

This Committee studies and deliberates possible measures for the future, while paying attentions to violence from husbands or partners, sexual crimes, prostitution, sexual harassment, and stalking behavior.

The Specialist Committee has issued the following reports:

"Towards Smooth Enforcement of the Law for the Prevention of Spousal Violence and the Protection of Victims" (October 2001 and April 2002), "Implementation Status of the Law for the Prevention of Spousal Violence and the Protection of Victims" (June 2003), and "Tasks to be tackled and Countermeasures on Violence against Women" (March 2004).

Council for Gender Equality

Chairperson : Chief Cabinet Secretary
Council members: 12 cabinet ministers designated by the Prime Minister, and 12 intellectuals appointed by the Prime Minister.

Specialist Committee on the Basic Plan for Gender Equality

This Committee studies and deliberates "basic philosophies" for the Gender Equality Basic Plan.

Special Committee on Monitoring and Impact Assessment

To ensure that the government policies and socioeconomic systems properly reflect gender equality perspectives, the Specialist Committee checks that each ministry is steadily implementing the Basic Plan for Gender Equality. The Specialist Committee also studies and discusses government policies that would have impacts on gender equality.

Specialist Committee on the Declining Birthrate and Gender Equality

By analyzing statistical data, the Specialist Committee studies and deliberates a possible relation between gender equality and the falling birthrate.