

Strengthening Gender Equality Policy Infrastructure in the Asia-Pacific Region(VII) : Policy Support for Capacity Building of Girls

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I. Introduction

1. Objectives and Significance of the Study

- Gender is an important issue that has been highlighted by the international community in discussing development cooperation. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) replacing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) include the issue as an independent and cross-cutting goal. The OECD has also continuously emphasized its significance by announcing the gender marker and publishing a variety of guidelines on gender equality.
- Since joining the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) in 2010, Korea has exerts its utmost efforts to support developing

countries and to contribute to the international community. However, its assistance in gender equality is deemed to have been far from satisfactory. The OECD DAC Peer Review has also pointed out needs for ODA expansion in gender equality and gender mainstreaming. According to the OECD gender marker, the percentage of Korea's aid for gender equality in its ODA as a whole was about 12% (2013-2014), far lagging behind from DAC members' average of 32%.

- Considering such national and global circumstances, Korean Women's Development Institute (KWDI) has conducted research for suggesting Korea's ODA policy direction. Since 2011, it has also implemented this ODA research project in partnership with four CPS countries¹⁾ in Asia such as Cambodia, Indonesia, Myanmar, and Vietnam.
- The research project of 2017 was designed to strengthen the four partner countries' policy capacity specifically for women and girls in line with the Better Life for Girls (BLG) Initiative, Korea's ODA policy announced in 2015. Its aim is to identify demand for local policies for women and girls in these countries and thereby to present the policy direction of Korea's future ODA in related spheres.

2. Methods and Contents

- This ODA research project has been carried out since 2011, with the aim of promoting changes in gender equality policy infrastructure in the four CPS countries in the Asia-Pacific region, namely

1) South Korean government regularly establishes *Country Partnership Strategies* on the aid supports for partner countries selected to be main partners of South Korea. Thus, CPS countries refer to about 26 main partner countries on which country partnership strategies are established.

Cambodia, Indonesia, Myanmar, and Vietnam while expanding Korea's ODA in gender equality.

- This report is based on KWDI's multi-year ODA research project, and it is based on the results of several activities conducted under this projects. This report is a study based on diverse programs such as capacity-building workshops and joint research with policy experts in partner countries, joint research with partner countries, and case studies on women's policy developments in Korea.

II. Literature Review and Analysis Framework

1. Literature Review on Girls' Studies in the Context of Development

- First, girls' studies in a development context have focused on identifying the status of girls' education and its utility, as well as understanding obstacles thereto to ensure effective aid. In other words, girls' education has improved much in numbers such as enrollment rates, but it is deemed to be necessary to further improve its quality in order to facilitate substantial capacity development. To this end, rather than simply educating girls, various social and institutional contexts surrounding girls' education should be taken into account.
- Second, existing studies on girls' health have pointed out that their health should be treated differently from the health of female children or adults. These papers have also stressed that such issues are attributable to girls' physical development and socio-cultural contexts. This shows that girls' health issues and their causes should

be dealt with through comprehensive and differentiated analyses and approaches. Meanwhile, the aforementioned existing research studies have discussed the issue of girls' health, concentrating on their physical health. However, their emotional health should also be considered as a significant element. Therefore, when discussing girls' health, research needs to expand to include both their physical and emotional health, as well as their circumstances. Literature reviews show that research on girls' health in Korea has yet to be sufficiently conducted in the context of development.

- Third, studies on girls' economic empowerment are classified into the following three categories: 1) research on the necessity of girls' economic empowerment; 2) literature on the correlation between girls' economic empowerment and the prevalence of HIV/AIDS; and 3) manuals or reports on how to promote girls' economic empowerment. The following lessons were learned through literature reviews. First, technical education on specialized subjects such as financial skills and business management, rather than basic clerical work, is more effective in promoting employment and increasing income of girls and young women. Second, even though the correlation between girls' economic empowerment and the prevalence of HIV/AIDS is not high, integrated approaches are considered to be meaningful in empowering girls economically and supporting victims HIV/AIDS. Lastly, integrated approach is required and it can create a greater synergy by providing financial management training along with life skill training and health education, rather than providing it separately.
- Literature on gender-based violence was reviewed, focusing on the following two themes: 1) violence against women and girls and 2)

harmful practices. Many studies on gender-based violence examine the status and causes of such violence and effective intervention models. Studies on the gender-based violence focus on the prevention of violence, proving that intervention models including group training programs for both men and women, local community mobilization programs, and those for women's income generation are effective in preventing gender-based violence. Studies on harmful practices mainly focus on female genital mutilation (FGM), early marriage, and infanticide. Considering that such practices are related to socio-cultural contexts, more careful strategies are required for effective interventions.

2. Analysis Framework

- The conceptual model of women and girls' empowerment developed by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation in 2017 applies to the analysis framework hereof. Unlike existing studies where the research framework is set up by sector such as education, health, vocational training, and so forth, this framework deals with issues including girls' empowerment in an integrated way. Also, this model points out that resources, agencies, and institutions affect one another in empowering women and girls. This research project puts its focus on institutions, where policy-makers have promoted changes for girls' empowerment.
- Meanwhile, existing research studies found that developing countries lack basic research and expertise for girls at governmental and national levels. Therefore, this research project concentrates on enhancing the girl-related policy-making and research capacity of the four partner countries in Southeast Asia collaborating with the

KWDI. To analyze the status of girls, gender-based violence (GBV) was added as one of the research topics, as well as education, health, and socio-economic empowerment which are the focus areas of the Korean government's BLG initiative. It is because the GBV, which is directly related to women's human rights is one of the most fundamental structural barriers to women's empowerment and is a global issue that can be resolved only through the approach with gender perspectives.

- Various actors and decision-makers who engage in the process of policy-making for girls should also be studied to analyze girls' status and deliver policy suggestions. They include family members (husbands, brothers, and sisters), neighbors, school teachers, community leaders, and religious leaders.

III. Status of Girls in Four Partner Countries and Needs Analysis

- This chapter analyzes the status of girls in the four countries (Cambodia, Indonesia, Myanmar, and Vietnam), focusing on the four areas, namely education, health, socio-economic empowerment, and gender-based violence and identifies related needs.

1. Status of Girls in Four Partner Countries

- The common issue faced by the four partner countries is that vulnerable groups such as rural community members and ethnic minorities are characterized by a low level of education and lack of access to education, health, and sanitary facilities. It is pointed

out that underprivileged girls have been isolated from school education since their adolescence, and the girls out of schools are sometimes exposed more to sexual violence against children and sex-trafficking. Therefore, different supports should be offered to girls in and out of school in the partner countries. First, for girls who benefit from school education, curricula need to be revised to help them receive proper sex education and overcome the stereotype of gender roles. On the other hand, girls out of school education are exposed to poorer situations in terms of human rights, working as unpaid employees and experiencing sexual exploitation including sex trafficking. However, they have often been excluded from national and international supports.

- Issues of girls in each country are as follows. First, Cambodia has following issues that should be addressed for girls: absence of statistics on early marriage and teenage pregnancies, lack of legal punishments against gender-based violence, and elementary school programs reflecting patriarchal culture, so-called *Chbap Srey*.
- Second, Indonesia faces several problems around girls status as follows: harmful practices including FGM commonly practiced in the muslim community, teenage pregnancies, childbirth, abortion attributable to lack of sex education, and child labor frequently witnessed in rural areas.
- Third, Myanmar needs to resolve the following issues: issues of girls in rural and conflict-affected areas who are exposed to very poor circumstances in terms of education, health, labor, gender-based violence, and others; inefficient vocational training and education for girls that fail to meet market needs; and child sex and human trafficking.

- Last, Vietnam has several issues to deal with as follows: lack of education for girls in rural areas and ethnic minority groups; sexual violence against girls; teenage pregnancies and abortion; and a high level of son preference in society.

2. Policy Needs for Girls by Sector

- First, the compulsory education period for three partner countries except Myanmar is nine years during which primary and secondary education is offered. It is much shorter than the period for advanced countries including Korea. Given that the period during which girls receive education is closely related to their entry into labor markets and the sex industry, early marriage, teenage pregnancies, etc., the compulsory education period should be extended.
- Second, teenage pregnancies, abortion, and childbirth are common issues faced by the four partner countries. They are related to sexual violence, sexual exploitation, and gender-based violence, as well as lack of sex education, requiring policy solutions thereto.
- Third, all of the four partner countries are exposed to problems including girls' labor in rural areas and female child domestic workers entering urban areas. These issues should be considered, linking with improvement of girls' level of education.
- Fourth, gender-based violence undermine women's human rights. However, related legal systems in the four partner countries only focus on the prevention, and the protection and rehabilitation of victims and punishments against offenders are limited. Therefore, it is necessary to establish offender punishment systems and to offer education for the police, the judiciary, and girls to raise their awareness thereof.

IV. Local and International Best Practices and Projects for Girls

- This chapter introduces best practices and projects worth referring to in implementing related programs and policies for girls by donor countries and agencies including the Korean government.

1. Best Policies for Girls in South Korea

- Based on interviews with global gender experts and seminars with researchers and related professionals at home and abroad, the following policy cases related with girls and adolescents are identified as the areas where Korea enjoys a comparative advantage. In the future, the Korean Government can consider them as potential project subjects when offering related supports through ODA:
 - A Review on the Decline of Preference for Sons in South Korea
 - Laws and Policies on the Public Disclosure of Child Sex Trafficker Information in Korea
 - A Study on the Gender-Sensitive Textbook Revision in Korea
- * The above three best practices have been published as individual case studies. Please refer to the reports for more information on each case study.

2. Best Projects for Girls in South Korea

○ Stand Up Against Sex-Trafficking of Minors

- **Description:** Since the 2000s, sex-trafficking in Korean society has been widely spread via online networks, but policy responses thereto have been far from satisfactory. Against this backdrop, “Stand Up Against Sex-Trafficking of Minors” has delivered integrated services to teenage victims of sex-trafficking.
- **Main Activities**
 - ① **Cyber Counseling:** It directly intervenes in cyber spaces to act against sex-trafficking, quickly preventing sex-trafficking and work on reporting/warning/punishing on sex-trafficking against those who arrange and promote sex trafficking. It also helps create high-quality jobs for teenage victims.
 - ② **S.N.S. (Stop N Start):** It offers diverse support for the self-support and rehabilitation of child and teenage victims of sex-trafficking in cyber spaces including internet sites and smart phone applications.
 - ③ **Seoul Center for Minors in Crisis:** It supports teenage victims of sex-trafficking and adolescents in crisis to escape from sex-trafficking, preventing their re-entry into the trafficking zones.
- **Characteristics and Lessons Learned:** This project provides significant implications on Myanmar and Vietnam where sex and human trafficking are very serious issues. However, given that local governments’ investments into such spheres are hardly expected, it is necessary for donor countries and international organizations to provide financial aid.

○ *TacTeen Tommorrow*

- **Description:** It is Korea's first specialized sex education center set up to create a safe and healthy society where teenagers' human rights are protected.
- **Main Activities**
 - ① **Sexuality Education Center for Youth:** It is Korea's first sex education center established in 1999 where adolescents can directly see and listen to, and touch teaching materials. The center delivers customized education by target, launches campaigns, develops manuals, strengthens experts' capacity, and operates instructor cultivation programs.
 - ② **Sexual Violence Relief Center for Youth:** It offers counseling services for child and teenage victims of sexual violence. The center also operates correctional education and treatment programs for sexual violence offenders, and delivers education services for preventing offenders from committing sex crimes again.
 - ③ **Center for Child and Youth Human Rights:** It offers counseling and education on human right violation for part-time youth workers. It also implements activities to demand the implementation of the Hague Convention, and conducts activities for the prevention of child abuse with the aim of creating a social environment where children and teenagers' human rights are protected and supporting them to grow to become human rights promoters.

- **Characteristics and Lessons Learned:** By offering sex education to male and female adolescents, this project has made structural changes including the prevention of sexual violence, sexual harassment, school violence, and early marriage, which are key issues faced by the four partner countries. The programs also help girls recognize their rights to control their bodies, thereby playing a key role in promoting their internal empowerment.

○ Mirim Meister School²⁾

- **Description:** The Mirim Meister High School is a specialized school in new media contents. It is not only a Korea's "Meister School" for girls but also Korea's first IT professional education institute.
- **Main Activities**
 - ① **Programs on New Media Contents:** The school opens and operates departments of Interactive Media, New Media Design, and New Media Solution.
 - ② **Global Programs:** It also promotes students' global spirit through overseas training and international exchanges.
 - ③ **Career Guidance and School-Employer Collaboration Programs:** It helps students effectively get employed after graduation through the signing of MOUs with companies and systematic career management and guidance.

2) 'Meister School' refers to a school customized for labor market demand that is established to cultivate "meisters" for the purpose of resolving various issues faced by vocational high schools in Korea such as a fall in the number of schools and students, lack of interest in vocational education, etc.

④ **Student-run Enterprises:** It supports students to experience real business circumstances and to form business mindset through the operation of student-run businesses.

- **Characteristics and Lessons Learned:** This best practice for high-quality vocational training for girls reflecting labor market demand can be considered as an international best practice, against the backdrop of the needs for and importance of girls' education in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) being highlighted across the world.

3. Best Development Projects for Girls

○ UNICEF Nepal Rupantaran Program

- **Description:** In Nepalese, rupantaran means transformation. This UNICEF program was implemented in 2014, with an aim of promoting youth's, especially girls' empowerment via education for social and basic financial capacity-building.
- **Main Activities:** This six to nine month-long education program consists of 15 modules for seven focus areas such as soft-skills/ leadership, health, civic education, environmental/climate change, economic empowerment, sex education, and violence.
- **Characteristics and Lessons Learned:** It offers education based on diverse themes including soft skills and leadership to facilitate girls' holistic development, thereby promoting social integration and development of communities.

○ World Bank's Laos STEPS Program

- **Description:** The program, one of the World Bank's Adolescent Girls Initiative (AGI) projects, is designed to enable youth in Laos, especially girls and young women, to successfully advance into labor market.
- **Main Activities:** It helps youth in Laos strengthen their start-up capacity and discover business items in partnership with communities and companies, offering them career counseling and mentoring services.
- **Characteristics and Lessons Learned:** It supports employment and start-ups at the same time, thereby leading young women to promote their economic empowerment in accordance with circumstances faced by each country.

○ Child Fund's 'Pass It Back'

- **Description:** It teaches children and teenagers soft skills such as leadership and problem-solving capabilities through sports activities and provides diverse curricula to encourage parents and communities to participate in the initiative, thereby contributing to the development of communities and society as a whole.
- **Main Activities:** It promotes growth of children, teenagers, and communities through sports games such as rugby, offering education based on curricula containing information on self-cultivation that can be used for real lives.
- **Characteristics and Lessons Learned:** It encourages girls to further develop soft skills including leadership and problem-solving capabilities through sports activities. It also provides curricula

based on information on self-development to enable them to have a clear understanding of gender, reproductive health and rights, future careers, and violence prevention.

V. Conclusions

1. Policy Suggestions by Sector for the Design and Implementation of ODA Projects for Girls in Developing Countries

A. Education

- First, supports for education and health need to be provided in an integrated manner. Drinking water and sanitary facilities at school are closely related to girls' attendance rates. At the same time, the issues of early marriage and teenage pregnancies faced by the four partner countries can be partly resolved through sex education.
- Second, girls out of school need more support. Girls frequently drop out of school, and they are also likely to be exposed to child labor, sex-trafficking, etc. Thus, more attention is required to the protection of their human rights, but sufficient attention has yet to be paid to them.
- Vocational education for girls should be more diversified and specialized. Economic development raises demand for high-quality technical professionals. Therefore, girls should be supported to be employed in high-quality jobs by enabling them to acquire advanced skills and knowledge through measures such as support for STEM education.

B. Health

- First, in implementing ODA projects in health sector, especially maternal health, female adolescents should also be included as targets. Health of girls reaching the age of puberty is a very complicated issue. Given that early marriage and sexual experience, teenage pregnancies, and teenage abortion are prevalent issues in the four partner countries, supports on girls' reproductive health need to be considered.
- Second, issues faced by girls in these countries are closely related to structural factors including religious and socio-cultural norms, which should be considered in the process of carrying out ODA projects related to health. While implementing such projects, proper measures including sex education should be provided to male students, teachers, communities, and families to have a better understanding on gender issues. As a result, girls will have a better chance of overcoming gender-discriminatory norms and having the right to self-determination in sexual issues.
- Third, integrated approaches are required, given that the issue of girls' health is closely linked to education, violence, etc. As they start their menstruation, adolescent girls' school attendance rates often drop sharply. Moreover, those out of school are more easily exposed to poorer labor conditions, sexual exploitation, and sexual violence, which often leads to health problems.

C. Socio-Economic Empowerment

- First, partnerships with private sectors should be strengthened, delivering vocational training programs that meet demands in industry and labor market, actively promoting programs related to market needs based on field practices.
- Second, in accordance with national economic situations, start-up projects may be more effective. Therefore, taking into account each country's industry structure, start-up support projects need to be actively carried out rather than supports on employment.
- Third, integrated approaches are required in empowering girls and young women by including soft-skill training. Girls should be supported to enhance their self-esteem and to further develop their capabilities in leadership, interpersonal relations, collaboration, communication in spite of structural constraints featuring social inequality. The aim thereof is to help them achieve what they need, in connection with the planning and implementation of ODA projects for girls in developing countries. Technical and on-the-job training should also be delivered for their empowerment.

D. Gender-Based Violence

- Efforts to raise community members' awareness on gender-based violence are also required along with establishing and revising related laws and systems. Therefore, when devising related projects, such elements should be considered.
- Against this backdrop, partner countries should be supported to establish and revise related laws and systems, build shelters for gender-based violence victims, and promote rehabilitation of such

victims. Also, sex education not only for the police and the judiciary but also for teenagers and girls should be delivered to enable them to recognize the seriousness of gender-based violence.

2. Significance and Limitations

- Based on various activities under KWDI's multi-year ODA research project, this research report has a significance as a research featuring various project elements including capacity-building workshops for policy experts in partner countries. In this vein, this study is deemed to be meaningfully differentiated from existing research mainly based on literature reviews.
- This research provides basic information and policy suggestions for the implementation of the Better Life for Girls (BLG) initiative through ODA projects and other development projects. In this regard, its contributions to policy-making are deemed to be significant.
- Even though there are uncertainties in the future of BLG initiative, girls and adolescents, who are doubly disadvantaged as women and youth, should be given keen attention in the context of development. Needs for support for girls in developing countries have been highlighted at home and abroad. As supports for girls are also in line with the SDGs which is a global development discourse, the Korean Government should continuously reinforce its support for girls in these countries.

3. Future Strategy for the Design and Implementation of ODA Projects for Girls in Developing Countries

- Integrated approaches are essential based on understanding of inter-relatedness of diverse issues including education, health, vocational training, and violence around girls in developing countries.
- Strategic approaches are required to eliminate social norms and structural barriers that are harmful to girls.
- Manuals that offer specific know-how should be developed to ensure mainstreaming of girl-related issues in development projects.



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