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Policy Measures for the Social Inclusion of Marriage-based Immigrant Women: Focusing on Expanding Social Participation

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Korean Women's Development Institute

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Contents

I. Introduction	1
1. Motivation and purpose of study	1
2. Study Contents	2
3. Methodology	5
II. Key findings	7
1. Immigrant women at risk of social exclusion	7
2. Starting point of social participation: Participation in home-country / immigrant groups	9
3. Needs and realities regarding the broadening of areas of social participation: beyond the ‘inside’ group	11
4. The Familial / social environmental factors informing immigrant women’s social participation	15
III. Policy suggestion for expanding immigrant women’s social participation	16
1. Establish policy goals and concretize agenda for expanding immigrant women’s social participation	17
2. Providing basic support for participation among immigrants at risk of social exclusion	19

3. Evaluation and improvement of existing projects related to immigrant women's social participation	20
4. Acknowledgement of immigrant women's organization as policy counterparts	21
5. Seek steps for enhancing immigrant women's social participation capacity and shaping family environments	22
6. Approaching the quality level of inter-group relations, focusing on institutions overseeing joint participation	24
7. Support for inter-organization collaboration for improving inter-group relations	25

Tables

〈Table 1〉 New legal provisions for broader social participation among marriage-based immigrants and naturalized people in the Multicultural Families Support Act (proposal)	18
〈Table 2〉 New policy agenda for marriage-based immigrants' social participation in terms of the Basic Plan for Multicultural Family Policy (proposal)	19

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I . Introduction

1. Motivation and purpose of study

- Immigrants' participation in society is a fundamental factor for the stable life of immigrants and their families. This participation needs to be taken into account with regards to central elements of the agenda for a multicultural society – including social integration, inter-group relations, and furthermore, ‘a process for the promoting conditions conducive to the social participation of groups marginalized due to age, gender, disability, race, economic status, immigration background and others’ (UN 2016: 1)¹⁾.
- However, in Korea, immigrants' participation has been diminished, with participation becoming confined to within immigrant groups.

1) UN. 2016. Leaving No One Behind: the Imperative of Inclusive Development. Report on the World Social Situation 2016 – Executive Summary -.

Participation via interactions with non-immigrant groups (mainstream groups in particular) remains limited. Given this, social participation of immigrants is not likely to develop in a positive manner.

- This study aims to identify the current state of immigrant women's social participation with a view to specifying relevant policy agendas, exploring the possibility of expanding social participation, and proposing alternative policy recommendations.

2. Study Contents

A. Social inclusion and immigrants' social participation

- This study explored the significance of immigrants' social participation as a key component of social inclusion, and explored policy approaches for expanding social participation. To this end, it investigated the concept and component of social exclusion and inclusion as well as identifying the significance, aspects, issues and determinants of social participation among immigrant groups who are at the risk of social exclusion. Particularly, this study focused on the fact that the area of social participation by immigrant groups can be classified into the home-country group and the mingled group. Based on this classification, it sheds light on the characteristics, values, and relatedness among areas of participation.

B. State of immigrants' social participation and related factors

- This study looked into the state and future intention of marriage-based immigrant women living in Korea, and analyzed the factors influencing their social participation and future intentions.

- First, it examined the state of marriage-based immigrant women's social participation and then classified their participation into the "home-country group", in which marriage immigrant women from the same home country come together, the "other group" in which there is no such requirement, and the "mingled group" which is the combination of the two former groups. Then, participation statuses by type were comparatively analyzed. In addition, factors affecting social participation and determinants by type of social participation were analyzed to identify factors that may impact the likelihood of immigrant women's social participation.
- Regarding social inclusion, the willingness to participate is just as important as actual participation. As such, this study identified the intention to participate in the future, with comparative analysis of intention by type of participation. It also shed light on the factors affecting participation intention. To this end, this investigation examined the influence of past participation experience on future intention.
- Additionally, in order to identify obstacles that hinder immigrant women from partaking in society, this study looked into relevant difficulties. In particular, it noted that not only individual elements, but also discrimination and other social factors as well as spousal support and family characteristics, can play a key role in the decision. In view of such factors, this study investigated the influence of spousal support on participation experience and intention, while also looking at how social participation experience influenced experiences of discrimination.

C. Immigrant women's social participation experience and possibilities for expansion

- In light of the actual experiences of immigrant women, this study identified the dynamics of social participation process – including the formation of interest in, and attempts at, social participation, specific activities, pleasure and frustration from participation, restoration of interest in participation, and the broadening of participation areas. Also, it examined the value and limitations of participation while also looking at inter/intra-group relationships in the participation process. This study identified the extent of, and barriers to, immigrants' gatherings and activities at policy-relevant institutions including central and local governments, the Multicultural Family Support Center and Integration Centers. In addition, it also addressed the experience of participation in private organizations, which have taken root in other countries as a central part of immigrant social participation measures but has yet to do so in Korea.
- This study found that, for immigrants, intra-group participation is totally different from inter-group participation in terms of nature and meaning. In view of this, it classified immigrants' gatherings and participation into the immigrant women-centered and the Korean-accompanied ones. This investigation examined participation motivation in each area, specific contents and methods of activities, positive and negative experiences during the process of activities, and relationships among participants. On top of that, the effect and limitation of participation and the reason for the cessation of participation were approached from the perspective of participants.

- This study also looked at the interest, attempts, and constraint factors in expanding the scope of activity to other areas, based on previous activity in one area. Adding to this, it also identified the needs relevant to promoting interest in social participation and expanding areas of participation.

D. Policy measures for promoting social participation among immigrant women

- Based on the above insights, this study crafted a policy agenda to expand the participation of immigrant women in society. To this end, it firstly identified the direction of development and implementation of related policies and assessed the performance and limitations of existing policies. Moreover, this research explored and analyzed policy cases from overseas, drawing implications for the expansion of the immigrant society's participation. Based on a comprehensive review of these findings, this study sought a policy plan that could expand the participation of immigrant women in society.

3. Methodology

A. Analysis of the raw data of the 2018 National Survey of Multicultural Families

- To understand the status of women's participation in society and their future intentions, this study re-analyzed the raw data of the 2018 National Survey of Multicultural Families.
 - Among all immigrant subjects of the National Survey of Multicultural Families, naturalized people who do not belong to specific classifications carry very different characteristics from

others, so they were excluded from the analysis. Only both marriage-naturalized immigrants and marriage-based immigrants who do not have Korean citizenship were included in our analysis. In addition, since the nature of marriage-based male immigrants is very distinctive from that of females one, only the latter were selected for this study, for the sake of analytic efficacy.

- The survey analyzed responses to questions directly or indirectly related to social participation, including the current status of immigrants' participation in gatherings and activities, difficulties in participating in them, social relations, and experiences of social discrimination.

B. Interview with immigrant women

- In order to understand the specific social participation experiences and needs of migrant women, this study conducted interviews with those who had participated in gatherings and activities.
 - This research decided to interview immigrant women who have participated in activities via policy-related organizations, such as the central and local governments, Multicultural Family Support Centers, Integration Centers, and immigrant women who have participated in private organizations, which are considered a key component of immigrants' social participation in other countries.
 - Considering the composition of immigrants' social participation areas, all, or most, of the participants were divided into the home-country gatherings and activities and the Korean-accompanied ones. All of those classified persons were chosen for interview.
 - Interviewees were selected by recommendations of institutions and

organizations within the researchers' networks. Others were approached through the snowball method, with interviews being conducted on 20 people who were willing to participate.

C. Analysis of current domestic policy and overseas cases

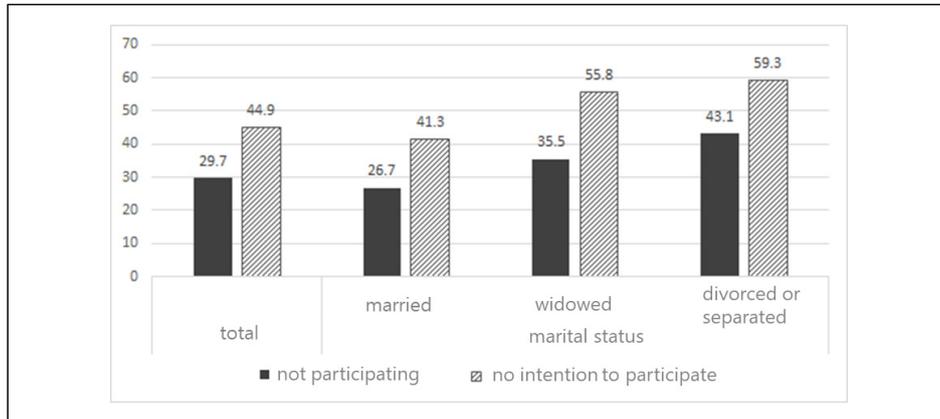
- In order to understand the current status of domestic policies, this study collected and analyzed policy-related data, such as related laws and basic plans, detailed implementation plans by year, plans for major projects, and outcome reports.
- In addition, it conducted expert consultation at each research stage and performed interviews with persons in charge of connecting policies and marriage-based immigrants, if necessary.
- This study also collected and examined policy cases on immigrants' social participation of international organizations, major countries, and local governments for developing policy measures.

II. Key findings

1. Immigrant women at risk of social exclusion

- According to the 2018 National Multicultural Family Survey, 29.7% of marriage-based immigrant women did not participate in any gatherings. Moreover, 44.9% of those who do not intend to participate in society are not likely to participate in gatherings and activities in the future as well. Thus, this non-participatory intention poses a high risk of social exclusion.

Unit: %



Source: Re-analysis of the 2018 National Multicultural Family Survey, Ministry of Gender Equality and Family

[Share of marriage-based immigrant women who are not participating in gatherings and activities / those with no intention of such participation, by marital status]

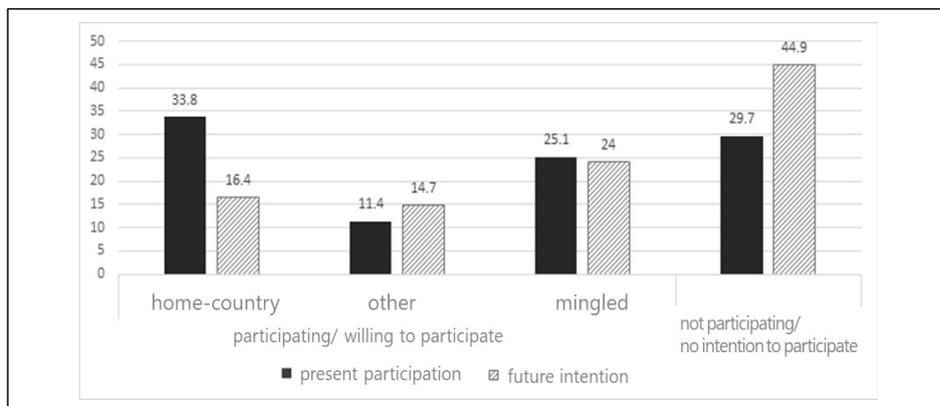
- What is important for those at risk of social exclusion is to provide an opportunity to restore their interest and willingness to participate in society. According to the raw data analysis, immigrant women who were divorced or bereaved were more willing to participate in home-country gatherings. Interviews confirmed that marriage-based immigrants and single parents formed self-help groups to restore reduced social relationships that were cut back following divorce and bereavement, and that participation in such gatherings paved the way for wider participation.
- However, the reality is that most divorced and bereaved marriage-based immigrants are not comfortable indicating their situation to anyone. Furthermore, they faced realistic difficulties participating in gatherings and activities due to their having to make a living, do housework, and provide care. This suggests the importance of an active approach, such as providing opportunities

for self-help gatherings to meet practical needs of immigrant women in those difficult situations.

2. Starting point of social participation: Participation in home-country / immigrant groups

- Areas of immigrants' participation in society consists largely of those inside and outside of immigrant groups, with 58.9% (those who only participate in the home-country group and other groups) of marriage-based immigrant women participating in home-country groups. This indicates that this group is a critical channel for them to participate in society.

Unit: %



Source: Re-analysis of the 2018 National Multicultural Family Survey, Ministry of Gender Equality and Family

[State of marriage-based immigrant women's participation in gatherings and activities and their future intention of such participation]

- For immigrant women, the home country group is an important starting point for social participation, especially during the early days of life in Korea where language becomes a hurdle for

communication. This participation is almost the sole way of making connections outside of their families. The home-country gatherings can be formed naturally, and there are relatively many opportunities for immigrant women to participate in gatherings and activities together through related institutions or organizations. The self-help meetings of the Multicultural Family Support Center also functions as a starting point for participation in the gathering, and the central and local governments also form consultative groups of immigrants / immigrant women to promote social participation, thus providing another channel for activities centered on immigrant women.

- Through participation in immigrant women's group, immigrant women feel comfortable with each other when they are exhausted and help each other when they encounter difficulties that are not readily understood even by family members. However, once the difficulties of early adaptation are overcome and family relationships are established to some extent, the need to share difficulties and offer comfort in their mother tongue will not be as great as before. As people move to other regions or find jobs, they will have fewer chances to gather and communicate together. As more and more immigrants find employment, the frequency of such gatherings may also decrease.
- On the other hand, within 'home-country' groups tied to government or related organizations, immigrant women find it difficult to exercise agency as an autonomous member of society. Indeed, they can sometimes become subjects of 'mobilization'. In some cases, immigrant women form their own organizations to overcome such limitations. Such organizations, building on their unique circumstances,

also exercise social influence to change the discriminatory realities faced by themselves and their children.

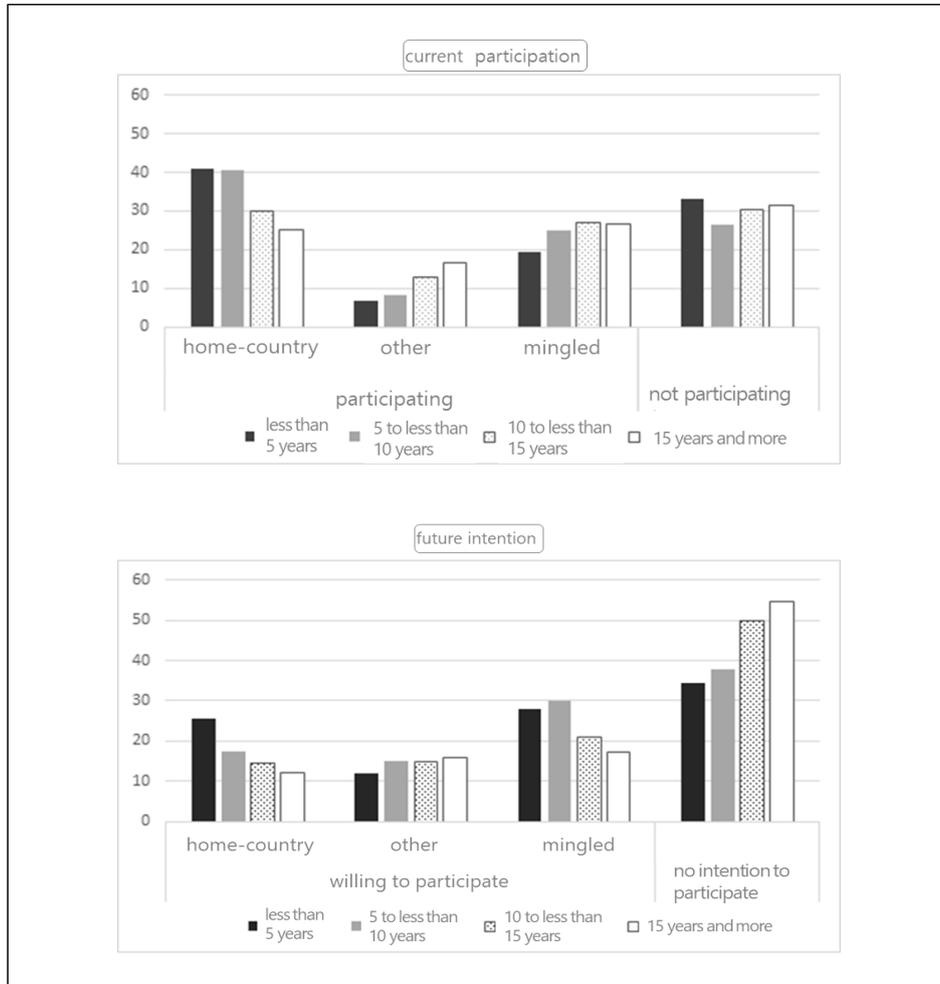
3. Needs and realities regarding the broadening of areas of social participation: beyond the ‘inside’ group

- With regards to immigrants’ participation in society, participation in ‘outside’ groups, particularly those involving relationships with mainstream society, form another axis alongside participation within immigrant groups. For immigrants, relationship with mainstream groups is a key indicator of settlement, and represents an important aspect for gaining social resources that cannot be accessed within immigrant groups. In particular, unlike family-unit immigrants who share ethnic backgrounds, participation accompanied by relationships with mainstream groups is more special for women who play a role as wives and mothers of mainstream groups. Furthermore, relationship with mainstream groups is recognized for its importance at the social level, in that social inclusion can be realized only on the basis of participation involving relationships between groups.
- As shown in the figure above, the participation of immigrant women in society is currently concentrated in the home-country group. However, the majority of respondents expressed intentions of participating in both the home-country gatherings and other gatherings in the future. Comparing the status of participation by type of participation with future intentions, while at present the majority (33.8%) of the respondents are only participating in native gatherings, only 16.4% are willing to participate solely in home-country groups in the future. On the other hand, there is no

significant difference between current participation and future willingness to participate in both ‘home-country’ and ‘mingled’ gatherings, while the willingness to participate in ‘other’ gatherings is even higher than current participation.

- In view of this, the fact that 45% of marriage-based immigrant women are not willing to participate in the future may be related to the markedly small number of respondents willing to participate only in ‘home-country’ gatherings. While currently, most immigrant women participate only in the ‘home-country’ group, this figure is likely to decrease in the future. There will be significant changes in overall social participation depending on how open they are to participating in other gatherings.
- In this regard, while it is highly likely that social participation will be restricted during the early stages of life in Korea, it is also worth noting that it is difficult to expect immigrant women to participate actively in society solely based on their spending more time in Korea.
- Oftentimes, the longer immigrants live in Korea, the more likely the major obstacles to social participation - including the Korean language - are to be eased. Whereas this would be expected to revitalize various gatherings and activities, the actual situation among immigrant women is completely different. As shown in the figure below, interest in participating in immigrant groups, such as ‘home-country’ gatherings, tends to decrease significantly with time spent in Korea. However, neither is it realistic to consider gatherings or activities involving inter-group relationships as readily available alternatives.

Unit: %



Source: Re-analysis of the 2018 National Multicultural Family Survey, Ministry of Gender Equality and Family

[State of marriage-based immigrant women's participation in gatherings and activities and future intentions to participation, by years spent in Korea]

- Despite living among Koreans, they find it difficult to form relationships with Koreans on a personal level. Even on the public level, there are few opportunities for finding gatherings and activities that involve group-to-group relations. In this regard, the

transition of the Multicultural Family Support Center to the Integration Center and the introduction of programs involving immigrant women and Koreans make it more likely that new opportunities will be provided for gatherings and activities involving relationships with Koreans.

- However, because the Integration Center's actual programs do not consider inter-group relations at all, there is significant concern that its programs will fail to activate inter-group activities and improve relations, and instead reinforce the division and hierarchy between Koreans and immigrants. There have even been reported cases of discrimination and conflict amid contact between immigrants and Koreans at Integration Centers or during community activities.
- On the other hand, movements among activists in immigrant women's groups to participate in agendas other than 'multiculturalism' are also noteworthy in relation to the expansion of social participation. However, participation in such non-'multicultural' gatherings is not without shortcomings. Those who have attempted to participate in the aforementioned events may face a seemingly insurmountable 'inter-group wall' within such spaces if they experience their own perceived lack of capacity as immigrant women and are deemed 'eternally multicultural'.
- Amid the lack of preparedness, both personally on the part of immigrant women and among society as a whole, to participate together in inter-group relationships, the attempts by some immigrant women to go beyond the 'multicultural' may ring hollow. In order for immigrant women to participate more in non-'multicultural' spaces where they can express their opinions on various social

interests and actively engage in activities, both the immigrant women themselves and the non-‘multicultural’ spaces are in need of change.

4. The Familial / social environmental factors informing immigrant women’s social participation

- In addition to women’s own interest and enthusiasm for social participation, familial support is also an important factor. Similarly to other studies, we found that spousal support has a consistently positive impact on social participation. Meanwhile, in that familial support for social participation goes beyond the emotional level and is related to the sharing of housework and care duties, the experience of immigrant women participating in society provides important implications in this regard.
- Immigrant women commented that, while their families were not against their activities, neither were they supportive. In particular, there was a strong demand that house chores and child care should not be neglected due to other activities. So even while doing them, they had to adjust social activities to the extent that their domestic chores remained unaffected. Given that this is an experience shared by those who are relatively active in participating in society, familial support and role adjustment should be considered important in the approach to social activities. This is because, in the case of immigrant women with no social participation experience, families’ negative attitudes and burden on domestic activities are likely to present greater obstacles to pursuing activities outside of the home.
- In addition, it should be noted that social participation may act as a discriminating factor against immigrant women. As seen in cases

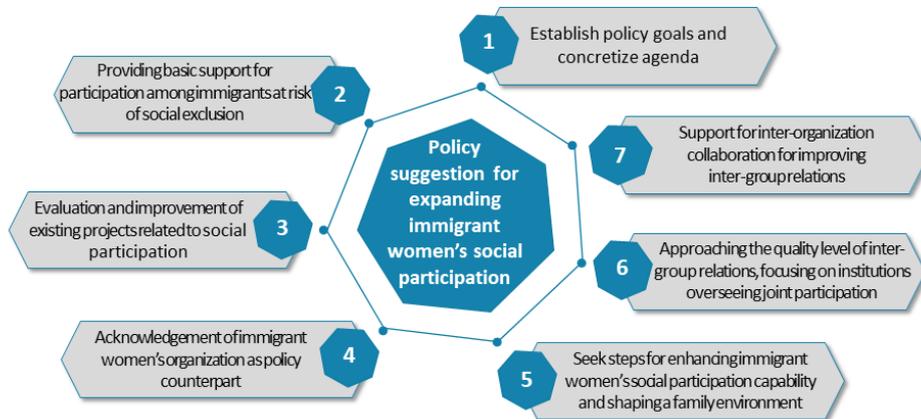
where immigrant women have experienced discrimination at Integration Centers and in community activities, where inter-group conflicts and divisions were intensified, simply expanding immigrants' participation in social environments that are not friendly to them can add to the problem of discrimination. If these problems are not addressed, there is a high risk of negatively affecting immigrants' social participation and inter-group relations. Thus, efforts should be made to change the social environment itself along with measures to expand immigrant women's participation in society.

III. Policy suggestion for expanding immigrant women's social participation

- Participation of migrant women in society depends on individual interest and capacity, familial support, and opportunity to participate. According to this study, some immigrant women face social exclusion risks due to their low interest in social participation, difficulty in finding opportunities, and lack of supportive conditions. Those who are unaffected by such risk participate mainly in 'home-country' groups. Immigrant women, especially those who have lived in Korea for a long time, are more interested in gatherings and activities that involve relations with Koreans. Yet even if they participate in such opportunities, there are concerns that they will be frustrated in the face of discrimination and division during the activities.
- The following are key points to be considered, not only for

immigrant women themselves but also for social inclusion: providing immigrant women with the means to restore their interest in social participation and letting them find opportunities to participate. It is also critical for those interested in gatherings and activities involving relations with Koreans to take part in diverse activities and build positive relationships.

- Multicultural family policies have implemented immigrant women’s social participation since the mid-2010s. But despite years of policy implementation, potential for improvement has been scarce, while problems have worsened with time. This demonstrates that the existing policies cannot reap a positive effect on the expansion of marriage-based immigrant women’s social participation, underscoring the need for a complete overhaul of the related policies.



[Overview of policy proposal]

1. Establish policy goals and concretize agenda for expanding immigrant women’s social participation

- In order for the policies related to the social participation of

immigrant women to be actively developed and implemented, its agenda should be established by the Multicultural Families Support Act and the direction of approach should be clearly outlined.

- New provisions should be stipulated into the act for a wider social participation among marriage-based immigrants and naturalized people, just like other stipulations of Article 5 for Enhancement of Understanding of Multicultural Families; Article 6 for Provision of Everyday Life Information and Educational Support; Article 7 for Measures for Maintenance of Equality in Familial Relationship. These legal measures will help the central and local governments to devise measures for supporting marriage-based immigrant women's social participation, reinforcing familial support for their social participation, and making government bodies take responsibility for shaping a relevant social environment.

〈Table 1〉 New legal provisions for broader social participation among marriage-based immigrants and naturalized people in the Multicultural Families Support Act (proposal)

Article 7-2 (Measures for broader social participation among marriage-based immigrants and naturalized people)

- ① Central and the local governments shall support marriage-based immigrants and naturalized people so that they can participate in diverse social activities, acting on their due status and expanding social relationship.
- ② Central and the local governments shall make endeavors to form family and social environments so that marriage-based immigrants and naturalized people can expand their social participation.

- In addition to the existing measures for expanding the opportunity of social participation among marriage-based immigrants, the Basic Plan for Multicultural Family Policy must also be made to address issues of immigrant groups at risk of exclusion for wider social

participation involving inter-group relations, for stronger familial support that leads to greater social participation, and for building an adequate social environment, all in a comprehensive manner.

- For now, the Basic Plan for Multicultural Family Policy, which will be valid by 2022, must be revised and improved considerably through interim evaluations.
- A new basic plan, to be implemented starting 2023, must be completely overhauled so that measures can be developed and implemented based on the following, more concretized agenda:

<Table 2> New policy agenda for marriage-based immigrants' social participation in terms of the Basic Plan for Multicultural Family Policy (proposal)

- Support for basic social participation for all marriage-based immigrants and naturalized people
- Activate gatherings and organizations centered on marriage-based immigrants and naturalized people so that they gain agency as members of society
- Promote social participation involving inter-group relations for marriage-based immigrants and naturalized people
- Actively address personal and social obstacles faced by marriage-based immigrants and naturalized people in the process of social participation
- Strengthen familial support and create a conducive social environment for marriage-based immigrants and naturalized people to participate more broadly in society.

2. Providing basic support for participation among immigrants at risk of social exclusion

- Of the policies related to immigrants' social participation, one area that should be prioritized relates to measures for ensuring that those who are exposed to multiple layers of exclusionary risk - e.g. low income, old age, and divorced / bereaved women - can build social relationship. This is a core mission for social inclusion.
 - Multicultural Family Support Centers should make it a key goal

for those who run a high risk of social exclusion, including those who do not participate in gatherings and activities, those who do not have intentions to participate, or those who do not utilize related centers, to set up and operate self-help groups. Guidelines on the formation and operation of such groups should be provided. Since it is difficult to quantify the efficacy of outreach for those at risk of social exclusion, additional measures should be provided in terms of the center's performance management and evaluation.

- In regions with a large number of immigrant women susceptible to exclusion (e.g. single-parent family, low income, old age, etc.), the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family and local governments should also consider developing and implementing differentiated projects so that local centers can focus on self-help projects for immigrant women with limited access to social participation. In addition, it may also be worth devising support projects so that immigrant groups with links to immigrant groups at risk of social exclusion can play a certain role as channels for social participation.

3. Evaluation and improvement of existing projects related to immigrant women's social participation

- Gatherings and activities run by the central and local governments, Multicultural Family Support Centers, Integration Centers, immigration bureau, and foreign offices should be assessed from the perspective of participants. In addition, their efficacy and shortcomings need to be evaluated, and improvement plan should be introduced with priority.

- It is also important to develop ‘indicators of social participation and inter-group relationships among migrant women’ applicable to gatherings and activities and to assess the current states of related programs by organization for driving improvement measures.
- Because it is not sufficient to simply assess the current status of programs and institutions and to prepare / implement improvement measures, it will be appropriate for outside experts to participate together through consulting.

4. Acknowledgement of immigrant women’s organization as policy counterparts

- In order for participants to realize the fundamental significance of social participation - i.e. to exercise agency and to gain affirmation from themselves and peers regarding their status as members of society - it is necessary to recognize immigrant women’s organizations as official policy partners and develop support projects to promote group activities aimed at expanding immigrant women’s participation in society.
 - * Overseas cases: Support programs that are only open to immigrant groups (e.g., New Zealand’s settlement support fund, Amsterdam integration and participation subsidy in the Netherlands), human resource support, including expert and volunteer help, information regarding support programs, seminars on how to write proposals, provision of spaces for activities, all of which are means for strengthening the self-reliance capacity of immigrant groups.
- It is worth reviewing measures to ensure that the central and local governments work together to educate immigrant women activists

at women's policy institutions run by local authorities and offer immigrant groups access to such spaces.

- Having immigrant women's organizations jointly develop and implement programs for group operators and activists may also represent promising alternatives.
- In addition, it may be worthwhile to actively consider designating hub institutions that provide the information related to group operations, such as organization-related systems and support projects, and, if necessary, match them with expert's support.
- Developing support projects that facilitate immigrant women's group activities

5. Seek steps for enhancing immigrant women's social participation capacity and shaping family environments

- In order for immigrant women to engage in a wider range of social participation, education and training programs should be developed where those immigrant women interested in participating in society can acquire the requisite capacity for participation involving inter-group relations.
 - It seems appropriate for programs to be developed by professional training institutions and for training to be administered jointly by professional institutions and immigrant women's organizations.
- The capacity required for participation in inter-group relations cannot be gained only by short-term education and training. Therefore, systematic and continuous approaches should be taken together from the initial adaptation stage.

- Institutions that intervene in the initial adaptation stage, such as the Multicultural Family Support Center, also need to develop various related programs, link programs, and establish institutional linkage systems so that they can lead to social participation capacities from a long-term perspective.
 - It may be desirable to develop a ‘Migrant Women’s Social Participation Mentoring’ program that enables those who already experienced life in Korea and those who rarely did so to share their experiences and needs regarding social participation. This can provide participants the opportunity to perceive the need for enhancing social participation capacities, appreciate the importance of a systematic approach over the long run, and share role models.
 - In regions where immigrant women’s organizations are active, having the above-mentioned programs be run jointly by immigrant women’s organizations and Multicultural Family Support Centers may yield positive results.
- As the support and reorganization of family members are important in expanding the social participation of immigrant women, family education or family unit gatherings and activities, all of which are for multicultural families, should help them recognize the importance and value of social participation and reorganize their roles among family members.
- Expanding the social participation of immigrant women should be established as the basic policy orientation of the Multicultural Family Support Center and the Integration Center.
 - Re-education programs also need to critically address related details so that they can be shared among center staff, family education

instructors, and counselors who directly contact multicultural families.

6. Approaching the quality level of inter-group relations, focusing on institutions overseeing joint participation

- Public institutions overseeing gatherings and activities involving inter-group relations must follow a cautious approach, so as to prevent inter-group division, discrimination, and marginalization of specific groups from taking place in the course of their activity.
 - Field institutions such as Integration Centers and Saeil centers which cater simultaneously to people with different backgrounds should explicitly mention ‘prevention of discrimination between groups’ in their operational guidelines.
 - Checklists for inter-group relations and guidelines for better inter-group relations should be prepared and made available to institutions.
 - Anti-discrimination programs for center staff, program participants and community activists, among others, should be developed and implemented.
- Beyond mere participation in some project or other, the paramount objective is to enable participants to build positive relations on equal footings throughout activities.
 - Existing joint activity programs in place at Integrated Centers or in local communities should be critically assessed as to whether they are fulfilling the above-mentioned role. By doing so, they can fine-tune the direction of joint activity programs in a way that can

promote inter-group relations and thus draft relevant detailed programs.

7. Support for inter-organization collaboration for improving inter-group relations

- It is necessary to aggressively provide residents and groups from different backgrounds with opportunities to plan, act, and thus collaborate on the same project.
 - In the case of local community-based programs such as community-building and social economy initiatives, having residents of diverse backgrounds participate and communicate together should be made a core part of program guidelines. This should also be included among program planning / evaluation criteria. Additionally, exploring and promoting cases of programs where residents from diverse backgrounds are expected to work positively toward promoting greater social participation by immigrant women.
 - The following measures should also be actively considered: developing support programs where immigrant women and Korean residents find a shared interest and act on it together; giving preferential considering to programs involving joint activities with immigrant groups when selecting support projects for private organizations.

