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A Study on Gender-mainstreaming Strategy in Korea (III): Developing an Organization-based Model of Gender Mainstreaming for Government Institutions

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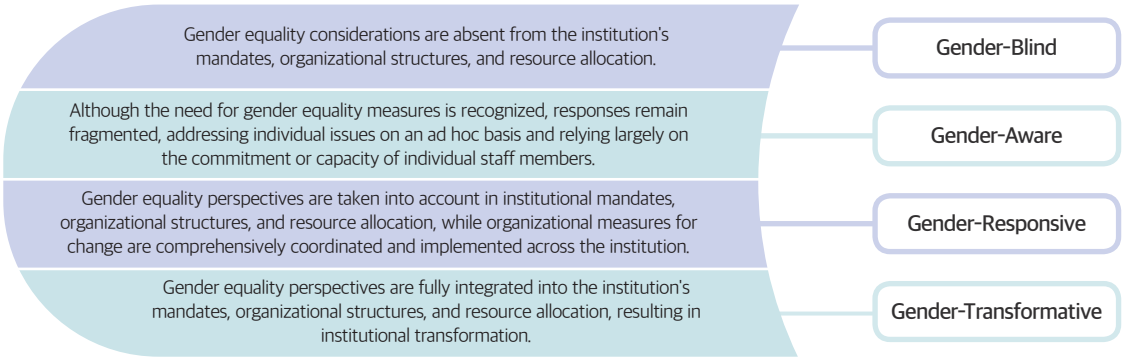
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Organization-Based Gender Mainstreaming for Government Institutions: International Practices and Institutional Measures

Abstract

- Gender mainstreaming has long been used as a strategy for advancing gender equality policy. However, its practical effectiveness has been limited because gender equality has not been fully institutionalized and embedded within government institutions themselves.
- Against this backdrop, this study proposes organization-based gender mainstreaming as a strategy for establishing gender mainstreaming as an institutional responsibility of government organizations. It further develops an implementation framework and institutional measures for applying this approach to central government agencies. To this end, the study reviews relevant institutional frameworks of international organizations — including the European Institute for Gender Equality(EIGE), the International Labour Organization(ILO), and the United Nations — and foreign governments, including Sweden and several state governments in Australia, and draws implications from these cases.
- Whereas conventional gender mainstreaming strategies have primarily focused on changing individual policy programmes and strengthening the capacity of the civil servants who administer them, organization-based gender mainstreaming focuses on the structural transformation of government institutions themselves, which plan, implement, and evaluate mainstream policies. In doing so, it is expected to provide a meaningful pathway toward achieving 'transformative gender equality,' the ultimate goal pursued by gender mainstreaming.

Developmental Stages of Organization-Based Gender Mainstreaming in Government Institutions



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1 Background and Issues

▶ Although gender mainstreaming has long been used as a gender equality policy strategy since the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, it has often been assessed as falling short of its expected impact.

- It has often been pointed out that one reason for this is that gender mainstreaming has not become firmly established as a responsibility and major function of government institutions. However, there has been relatively little research or few institutional initiatives on how to bring about change within government institutions themselves.

▶ The establishment of Gender Equality Policy Officers in eight central government ministries in 2019 further highlighted that an institutional framework for implementing gender mainstreaming had not previously been adequately established within central administrative agencies and that there had been no clear planning for how such a framework should be established.

- Over the past six years, efforts have been made to build organizational foundations for gender mainstreaming across ministries through these Gender Equality Policy Officers. However, because these efforts were not based on a consistent direction or common guidelines, their implementation has varied depending on the level of interest and circumstances of each institution and its leadership.

▶ This study argues that addressing the problems facing Korea's current gender mainstreaming strategy requires institutional mechanisms that make contributing to gender equality a responsibility and part of the work of all public organizations. From this perspective, it emphasizes the need for a gender mainstreaming strategy aimed at organizational change.

- Specifically, the study introduces the rationale, development, and implementation examples of organization-based gender mainstreaming, which regards not only policies but also government institutions as another dimension of the 'mainstream' that must be transformed from a gender equality perspective. It also examines the significance and implications of this strategy for the implementation of gender mainstreaming in Korea.
- Building on this analysis, the study proposes an implementation model and institutional measures for introducing organization-based gender mainstreaming in Korea's central government agencies.

2 The Concept and Development of Organization-Based Gender Mainstreaming

▶ The definitions of gender mainstreaming most frequently cited in the literature, particularly those of the United Nations and the Council of Europe, reflect two coexisting perspectives: one that views gender mainstreaming as a strategy for transforming policies and another that regards it as a strategy for transforming policy processes.

- The UN defines gender mainstreaming as 'the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies, or programmes, in all areas and at all levels, and of making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of policies and programmes, so that inequality is not perpetuated' (UN Economic and Social Council, 1997). This definition primarily emphasizes policy transformation.

- By contrast, the Council of Europe defines gender mainstreaming as "the (re)organization, improvement, development and evaluation of policy processes so that a gender equality perspective is incorporated into all policies at all levels and at all stages" (Council of Europe, 1998). This definition places greater emphasis on transforming policy processes.

▶ The idea that gender mainstreaming involves transforming policy processes or organizations emerged from the recognition of organizational issues through the trial and error of feminist development policies that began in the 1970s.

- Jahan (1995) argued that making international development organizations more responsive to women's issues requires changing the organizational rules and culture that shape policy processes and decision-making. In other words, the very processes through which institutions define their missions and establish policy priorities must be transformed.
- Goetz (1997) argued that international organizations continue to produce policies and programmes that fail to recognize women's needs despite having long pursued policies for women in development, and attributed this problem to gender bias embedded within institutions. She further argued that institutionalizing accountability for gender equality in development requires fundamental institutional change beyond policies and projects aimed merely at improving women's conditions.

▶ Subsequent theoretical and empirical studies have continued to reinforce the view that gender mainstreaming is fundamentally concerned with restructuring organizations.

- Rees (2005), for example, expanded the definition of gender mainstreaming to mean systematically integrating gender equality into all systems and structures, all policies, processes and procedures, organizations and their cultures, and ways of working and reporting in order to promote gender equality.
- Woodward (2003) argued that gender mainstreaming should constitute an institutional innovation that encourages organizations to critically examine the gendered implications of public policies. She maintained that gender mainstreaming should transform the way policies are formulated and implemented so that promoting gender equality becomes as routine and institutionalized a part of public administration as budget formulation.
- McGauran (2009) attributed the difficulty of implementing gender mainstreaming in an innovative way to the lack of alignment between the routine policy implementation processes of public organizations, such as policy coordination and budget allocation, and the way gender mainstreaming is implemented.

▶ More recently, international organizations have conceptualized gender mainstreaming as comprising two dimensions: programmatic gender mainstreaming (programmatic GM) and institutional gender mainstreaming (institutional GM). They suggest that each dimension should be pursued through different strategies and means (UNEG, 2018).

▶ The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) has developed guidance on institutional transformation as one of several approaches to implementing gender mainstreaming and has encouraged its implementation by European Union institutions and government institutions in individual countries (EIGE, 2016).

- According to EIGE's guidelines, institutional transformation is a strategy that integrates gender equality into the internal dimensions of an organization — including its objectives, day-to-day operations, rules and procedures, culture, and practices — so that the external outcomes of organizational operations, including programme results and service delivery, contribute to gender equality. Institutional gender mainstreaming is further defined as both a state in which gender equality has become an integral part of an organization's objectives and routine work and the process of achieving that state.

▶ In the course of developing Korea's gender mainstreaming system, various measures have been implemented to promote change within government institutions. However, most have been implemented in a largely formalistic manner and have been insufficient to firmly embed gender mainstreaming within individual institutions.*

* These measures include: △ developing implementation plans and setting implementation targets under the Basic Plan for Gender Equality Policy; △ designating Gender Equality Policy Officers and dedicated professional staff within central government ministries; △ establishing Gender Equality Policy Divisions; △ appointing Gender Impact Assessment Officers and working-level staff to administer the Gender Impact Assessment system; and △ providing gender awareness education for civil servants.

- Although these measures were implemented through legislation such as the Framework Act on Gender Equality and the Gender Impact Assessment Act, adequate conditions have not been established to enable the personnel responsible to fully perform their related duties. Furthermore, the development and utilization of policy instruments capable of embedding gender mainstreaming as a core function of government institutions have remained insufficient (Choi, 2018).

▶ Beginning in the mid-2010s, recognition emerged of the need for mechanisms to assess government institutions' gender mainstreaming efforts and performance and encourage improvement. Studies were subsequently conducted to develop diagnostic indicators (Kim et al., 2015; Kim et al., 2016), but these efforts did not lead to the introduction of institutional mechanisms such as performance management systems.

▶ Taken together, institutional transformation refers to a state in which gender equality is embedded and institutionalized within an organization; where gender equality is integrated into the institution's mandates and values and the work-related competencies of its members; and where gender-equal policymaking and service delivery are carried out through the routine processes of organizational operations. To achieve this state, organization-based gender mainstreaming needs to be pursued as a distinct pathway.

3 Cases and Implications from International Organizations and Foreign Governments

International Organization Case: The ILO Participatory Gender Audit [1)]

▶ A Gender Audit is an assessment framework used to evaluate the extent to which an organization has effectively integrated gender mainstreaming into its organizational structures, procedures, policies, programs, and services, as well as the degree to which gender mainstreaming has been institutionalized across these domains (EIGE, 2019, p. 2).

1) See, for example, https://www.itcilo.org/resources/ilo-participatory-gender-audit

- The concept was proposed in the 2000s by several organizations exploring ways to promote gender mainstreaming in global development cooperation and subsequently spread to international organizations, non-profit organizations, and other.

▶ The International Labour Organization (ILO) was the first organization within the United Nations system to introduce a gender audit. It developed the Participatory Gender Audit (PGA) as a diagnostic tool for assessing the extent to which gender mainstreaming has been embedded throughout an organization's operations.

- The audit covers: △ the organization's gender issues, gender expertise, capacities, and capacity-building efforts; △ the extent to which gender is considered in organizational objectives, programmes, implementation cycles, and the selection of partner organizations; △ the extent to which gender equality is reflected in information and knowledge management, organizational outputs, and public image; △ decision-making, staffing and personnel management, and organizational culture; and △ organizational members' perceptions of performance on gender equality.
- The perceptions and practices of organizational members are assessed through participatory methods, including interviews and workshops.

▶ The significance of the gender audit lies in its focus on the organizational capacities, structures, and human resources that generate gender mainstreaming outcomes, rather than on the outcomes themselves, as targets for change. It thus provides a means of assessing levels of gender equality and promoting improvement within individual organizations at various institutional levels.

◎ International Organization Case: The United Nations System-Wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women[2)]

▶ The United Nations System-Wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-SWAP) is an organization-level performance management framework for gender mainstreaming that applies across the entire United Nations system. It evaluates the implementation of gender mainstreaming in UN entities through 17 performance indicators organized into six performance areas.

- Following the establishment of UN Women in 2010, UN-SWAP was introduced in 2012. UN-SWAP 1.0 was implemented through 2017, and UN-SWAP 2.0 is currently in operation.
- The performance indicators comprise two broad categories: results-based management, which examines outcomes such as the implementation of gender-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and institutional measures that support the achievement of results, including accountability, human and financial resources, capacity, knowledge and communication, and coherence. Each indicator is rated on a five-point scale: △Exceeds Requirements, △Meets Requirements, △Approaches Requirements, △Missing, and △Not Applicable.

2) See, for example, https://gendercoordinationandmainstreaming.unwomen.org/un-swap

- Each UN entity conducts an annual self-assessment and submits the results of its assessment of gender mainstreaming implementation. It must also submit an implementation plan that includes specific improvement measures, implementation timelines, resource allocation, and follow-up actions to maintain or improve its current rating.

▶ UN-SWAP provides a model of a performance management system that organizations can adopt to promote gender mainstreaming within their constituent units.

- Another notable feature is that UN-SWAP comprehensively sets out the elements needed for institutions to transform toward gender equality and establishes developmental stages for each area, enabling institutions to readily identify the tasks they need to undertake in order to advance to the next stage.

Country Case: Sweden's Gender Mainstreaming in Government Agencies (JiM) Programme[3)]

▶ Since 2013, the Government of Sweden has operated the Gender Mainstreaming in Government Agencies (JiM) programme to integrate gender mainstreaming into the routine operations of government agencies.

- Participating agencies are required to establish gender equality policy objectives and develop and implement action plans that contribute to achieving those objectives. The Swedish Gender Equality Agency serves as a central support body for the gender mainstreaming efforts of participating agencies.

▶ Unlike the Korean approach of integrating a gender equality perspective into specific programmes or policies, the JiM programme focuses on establishing the conditions necessary for government agencies to implement gender equality policies.

Country Case: Gender Equality Action Plans in Australian State Governments

▶ New South Wales and Queensland in Australia have established frameworks to encourage or recommend the development of Gender Equality Action Plans by individual state government agencies and to support their implementation.

- New South Wales has announced that all government departments will develop Gender Equality Action Plans by 2025. The action plan of the NSW Treasury, the pilot agency, includes gender-equitable workforce and organizational management, improvements to policies from a gender perspective, and performance indicators for related measures.[4)]

- In Queensland, although not mandatory, the development of a Gender Equality Action Plan is strongly encouraged by including it in the discretionary specific-purpose planning requirements of the state's Government Performance Management Framework. The Queensland Government also provides guidelines and templates to support the development of plans tailored to individual agencies.[5)]

3) See, for example, https://swedishgenderequalityagency.se/gender-equality-in-sweden/gender-mainstreaming/guide-for-gender-mainstreaming/
4) See, for example, https://www.nsw.gov.au/departments-and-agencies/nsw-treasury/documents-library/gender-equality-action-plan-2024-2028
5) See, for example, https://www.publications.qld.gov.au/ckan-publications-attachments-prod/resources/443ecee2-7f8e-42d7-9d33-4f92922a402a/gender-equality-action-plan-guide.pdf?ETag=b6447274b72cca924a03a6d286f9bc19

Implications for Korea's Gender Mainstreaming Strategy

▶ Establishing an Effective Policymaking System for Transformative Gender Equality

- Existing gender mainstreaming instruments have largely focused on assessing the balance of benefits between women and men at the level of individual programmes, limiting their ability to drive the transformation of systems and structures that reproduce gender inequality.
- By integrating a gender equality perspective throughout the entire policy cycle — including policy planning, implementation, and performance management — within the government institutions responsible for leading mainstream public policies across different sectors, organization-based gender mainstreaming offers an alternative pathway for translating the goal of transformative gender equality into practice.

▶ Shifting the Focus of Intervention from Individual Civil Servants to Public Organizations

- Civil servants' limited understanding of gender equality, insufficient gender competence, and the resulting formalistic participation have been identified as major obstacles to the effectiveness of gender mainstreaming. Gender awareness training and strengthened gender governance have therefore been proposed as solutions. However, these approaches tend to give insufficient attention to the responsibilities and roles of the organizations to which civil servants belong.
- The focus of intervention therefore needs to shift from individuals to organizations, as sustainability can be secured only when accountable changes for gender-equal policymaking are made within an organization's internal processes, rules, and systems.

4 A Proposed Framework for Organization-Based Gender Mainstreaming in Government Institutions

▶ The basic idea of organization-based gender mainstreaming is to enhance the gender equality outcomes of all policies and services produced and implemented by government institutions by integrating a gender equality perspective into the three elements required for a government institution to function as an independent organization: mandates, structures, and resources.

<Table 1> Conceptual Framework for Organization-Based Gender Mainstreaming

Component			Goal
Mandates	The mission and objectives that constitute the fundamental rationale for the existence of an institution	Integration of a Gender Equality Perspective ➡	Gender equality is incorporated into the institution's mission and objectives, or the institution's mission and objectives themselves are redefined from a gender equality perspective.
Structures	Organizational rules, systems, and work processes that govern institutional operations		The institution's performance management system, operational framework, and policy/programme implementation processes are reorganized to contribute to the achievement of gender equality goals and improve related outcomes.
Resources	The allocation and management of financial and human resources		Adequate financial resources are allocated and managed for gender equality, and gender equality competencies are established as core job competencies and part of the professional expertise of organizational members.

▶ The sub-components of each of the three dimensions are defined as follows.

<Table 2> Detailed Components of the Organization-Based Gender Mainstreaming Framework

Component	Category	Details
Mandates	Goals	Gender equality considerations are incorporated into laws and regulations that define the institution's core values and mandates.
		Gender equality considerations are incorporated into the institution's mid- and long-term goals.
	Strategies and Plans	Mid- and long-term plans related to gender equality are established and implemented.
Structures	Performance Evaluation	Gender-responsive performance evaluations are conducted.
	Implementation Framework and Communication/ Collaboration	An implementation framework for gender equality-related work is established.
		Internal communication and collaboration on gender equality issues are strengthened.
		Gender equality-related governance mechanisms are enhanced.
	Work Processes	Gender mainstreaming tools are developed and utilized at each stage of work processes.
Resources	Financial Resources	Adequate budgets for gender equality initiatives are allocated and systematically managed.
	Human Resources	Employees' gender competence and professional expertise are strengthened.
		Gender experts are appointed and effectively utilized.
	Human Resources and Organizational Management	Personnel and organizational management practices incorporate a gender equality perspective.

▶ The model distinguishes four stages, beginning with government institutions' recognition of the need for gender equality-related measures, followed by the gradual application of a gender equality perspective to their mandates, structures, and resource management, and ultimately reaching a stage in which mandates, structures, and resource management that integrate a gender equality perspective have become routine.

• The classification and terminology of these stages draw upon the gender continuum model used by international organizations, including the United Nations Development Programme and United Nations Children's Fund, to assess the extent to which policies and programmes contribute to gender equality.

<Table 3> Developmental Stages of Organization-Based Gender Mainstreaming

Stage	Description
Gender-Blind	Gender equality considerations are absent from the institution's mandates, organizational structures, and resource management.
Gender-Aware	Although the need for gender equality measures is recognized, responses remain fragmented, addressing individual issues on an ad hoc basis or relying on the commitment or capacity of individual staff members.
Gender-Responsive	Gender equality perspectives are taken into account in institutional mandates, organizational structures, and resource management, while organizational measures for change are comprehensively coordinated and implemented across the institution
Gender-Transformative	Gender equality perspectives are integrated into the institution's mandates, organizational structures, and resource management, resulting in institutional transformation.

▶ To provide a more concrete indication of the level of organization-based gender mainstreaming at each developmental stage, the components of the proposed framework are combined with the developmental stages, as presented below.

<Table 4> Criteria for Satisfying the Components of Organization-Based Gender Mainstreaming by Developmental Stage

Component / Category		Gender-Blind	Gender-Aware	Gender-Responsive	Gender-Transformative
Mandates	Goals	No gender equality considerations are reflected in the institution's mandates or objectives.	Regulations are established for specific gender equality measures.	Legal foundations and objectives are established for advancing gender equality policies within the institution's area of responsibility.	The institution's responsibility for gender equality is explicitly mandated in laws and regulations, and institutional goals are established by integrating a gender equality perspective.
		Organizational members have low levels of awareness and acceptance of gender equality responsibilities.	⟷		Organizational members have high levels of awareness and acceptance of gender equality responsibilities
	Strategies and Plans	No institution-specific plans related to gender equality are established.	Plans are developed for specific gender equality measures (e.g., prevention of sexual harassment and sexual violence).	The institution develops its own mid- and long-term gender equality plan.	An institution-wide performance management system for the mid- and long-term gender equality plan is established.
Structures	Performance Evaluation	No performance evaluation related to gender equality is conducted.	Individual awareness and competency related to gender equality are included as evaluation indicators.	Organizational efforts and achievements in advancing gender mainstreaming are incorporated into performance indicators.	A system for evaluating gender mainstreaming outcomes and providing institutional feedback is established.
	Implementation Framework and Communication /Collaboration	No designated personnel are responsible for gender equality-related work (no assignment of responsibilities). No internal or external communication or collaboration on gender equality exists.	Gender equality responsibilities are assigned to existing staff within departments. Inter-departmental communication and collaboration remain limited.	A dedicated department or unit responsible for gender mainstreaming is established. Coordination and consultation across departments are actively conducted.	Personnel responsible for gender mainstreaming are assigned across key organizational units. Gender equality is routinely considered in internal consultation and coordination.
	Work Processes	General gender mainstreaming tools, such as gender impact assessment, are not utilized.	General gender mainstreaming tools, such as gender impact assessment, are utilized.	Gender mainstreaming tools tailored to the institution's characteristics are developed and applied.	Gender mainstreaming tools are integrated into all stages of the institution's work processes.
Resources	Financial Resources	No budget is allocated for gender equality.	Budgets are allocated for selected gender equality measures.	Adequate budgets are allocated for developing gender equality policies and implementing gender mainstreaming initiatives.	A system is established to track and manage gender equality-related budgets.
	Human Resources	No system exists for managing gender equality education, and there is no collaboration with gender experts.	General gender awareness training programmes are provided.	Gender-responsive capacity-building programmes tailored to the institution's functions are developed and implemented.	Gender-responsive competency is integrated as part of employees' professional capabilities and expertise.
		Organizational members have limited gender awareness competencies and expertise.	⟷		Organizational members demonstrate higher levels of gender awareness competencies and expertise.
	Human Resources and Organizational Management	No personnel or organizational management measures related to gender equality are implemented.	Personnel and organizational management measures focus primarily on supporting a specific gender group (women).	The level of gender equality in personnel and organizational management is regularly assessed and improved through periodic reviews.	Gender equality measures and perspectives are integrated across all areas of personnel and organizational management.
		Gender segregation exists in organizational authority, job assignments, work-family roles, and interpersonal interactions.	⟷		Gender balance is achieved in organizational authority, job assignments, work-family roles, and interpersonal interactions.

5 Proposed Institutional Measures and Tasks for Advancing Organization-Based Gender Mainstreaming in Government Institutions

Institutionalize a System for Assessing and Improving Organization-Based Gender Mainstreaming

- A systematic process should be institutionalized to set out what government institutions need to do to develop self-sustaining gender mainstreaming capacities and implementation frameworks, and to assess and improve their level of development.
- To this end, assessment indicators should be developed based on the developmental framework for organization-based gender mainstreaming presented above to assess the level of gender mainstreaming in Korea's central government agencies. A regular assessment process should also be established for each institution, together with procedures for monitoring the development and implementation of improvement plans.
- The system should serve as a government-wide mechanism for monitoring changes in the level of gender mainstreaming and managing gender equality performance, while also assessing the stage of gender mainstreaming reached by government institutions, measuring the extent to which their policies and programmes contribute to improving the level of gender equality, and sharing these results with the public.

Incorporate Gender Mainstreaming Indicators into the Government Performance Management System

- Evaluation indicators related to basic gender mainstreaming measures that should be uniformly applied across all central government agencies should be incorporated into the evaluation criteria for central government agencies under the Government Performance Evaluation System administered by the Office for Government Policy Coordination.
- These indicators should be added to the 'Administrative Management Capacity' component of the self-evaluation conducted by each central government agency under the responsibility of its head, which assesses administrative management capacity in the areas of organization, personnel management, and informatization.

Strengthen Government-Wide Oversight and Coordination of Gender Equality Policy

- Support should be provided to help individual government agencies establish institution-specific gender equality objectives that are aligned with national gender equality goals.
- Use the Basic Plan for Gender Equality Policy as a mechanism for overseeing and coordinating policies across ministries.

Strengthen the Institutional Framework for Gender Equality Policy to Enhance Ministerial Capacity and Inter-Ministerial Collaboration

- The role of the ministry responsible for the overall coordination of gender equality policy should be expanded. It should take the lead in developing a mid- and long-term roadmap for promoting gender equality policies and gender mainstreaming strategies across central government agencies and in expanding the allocation of resources, including personnel and budgets.
- The establishment of Gender Equality Policy Divisions should be expanded to additional ministries, and an operational model should be established. A legal basis for their establishment should also be provided in the Framework Act on Gender Equality.

- The functions of the Gender Equality Committee should be strengthened so that it oversees and reviews the implementation of gender mainstreaming across all ministries and deliberates and coordinates gender equality policies by ministry. Integrated operation should also be promoted through measures such as personnel exchanges between the Gender Equality Committees of individual institutions and the government-level Gender Equality Committee.
- A specialized support institution for gender mainstreaming should be established with gender expertise covering the diverse policy areas of approximately forty central government agencies.

Strengthen Inter-Ministerial Collaboration for Gender-Responsive Human Resources and Organizational Management

- The ministry responsible for the overall coordination of gender equality policy should work with the ministries and agencies responsible for government-wide human resource development and organizational management, including civil service training, personnel and service management, inspection, and integrity — such as the Ministry of Personnel Management, the National Human Resources Development Institute, the Ministry of the Interior and Safety, the Anti-Corruption and Civil Rights Commission, and the Board of Audit and Inspection of Korea — to help bring about changes that enable these institutions to implement policies incorporating a gender equality perspective.

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Lead Government Ministry	Gender Policy Division and Gender Impact Assessment Division, Ministry of Gender Equality and Family
Participating Ministries and Agencies	Gender Equality Policy Officers of eight government ministries and agencies — the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of National Defense, Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, Ministry of Health and Welfare, Ministry of Employment and Labor, Supreme Prosecutors' Office, and the Prosecution Service