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Knowledge Sharing on Korea's Development in Women's Policies

Gender Governance in Korea: A Case Study on the Abolition of Family Headship System

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Gender Governance in Korea: A Case Study on the Abolition of Family Headship System

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Korean Women's Development Institute (KWDI) is a government-affiliated think-tank under the Prime Minister's Office of South Korea. It has contributed to realizing gender equality, improving women's social participation and welfare and advancing family life and state through comprehensive researches on women's policies.

Foreword

South Korea has transformed itself from being an aid recipient to an aid donor since achieving an unprecedented economic growth in the last five decades. Such growth was not confined to economics spheres only, but also apparent in social spheres. Women's advancement was one of the areas which witnessed a dramatic transformation.

While there have been efforts to share Korea's development experience through means of Knowledge Sharing Program (KSP) spearheaded by South Korea's Ministry of Strategy and Finance (MOSF) and Development Experience Exchange Partnership (DEEP) by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, there hasn't yet been an initiative with a comprehensive approach to share women's advancement experiences. The current study is the first of its kind to compile case analyses of women's development in various areas of the South Korean society.

"Gender Governance in Korea: A case Study on the Abolition of Family Headship System" is an essential part of KWDI's multi-year ODA project entitled "Strengthening Gender Equality Policy Infrastructure in the Asia-Pacific Region". This is a project aimed at establishing political and social infrastructure for gender-equal policy in the Asia-Pacific region. By promulgating these research findings through means of policy consultation, workshops and international conferences, KWDI hopes Korea's development experience in relation to gender equality will be beneficial to its partner countries. Moreover, KWDI hopes that this knowledge-sharing will foster potential gender-related ODA projects that the South Korean government can collaborate and cooperate on with its partner countries to promote gender equality in the region.

I hope the concerted efforts made by KWDI and partner countries will bring substantive and positive changes in the lives of women in Asia.

Myung-Sun Lee, Ph.D.

President

Korean Women's Development Institute

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I. Introduction

2015 marks the 10th anniversary of abolishing the family headship system that had remained in the legal system as part of patriarchal system in Korean society. Korea's abolition of the family headship system was an event that had passed throughout the history of revising the Family Act¹⁾ and women's movement history. Furthermore, the abolition of the family headship system was assessed as a representative case of governance between related civic groups and the government.²⁾

The family headship system in Korea prescribes a male-centered patriarchal system as a legal system, thereby positioning man as the lord of the family and woman as a subordinate to him. This system had great impact on the status of Korean women and the family culture throughout Korean society. Surprisingly enough, women's and civic groups, either progressive or conservative, formed alliance in the process of abolishing this deep-rooted legal system in Korean society, eventually to create a historic event through gender governance together with the government.

In this research, we examined the background to the abolition of the family headship system, progress of the movement to abolish the family headship system, and gender governance for the abolition of the family headship system. In particular, we focused on the activity and significance of the Special Planning Task Force for the Abolition of the Family Headship System. Through the examination, we aimed to present experiences and implications of Korea's gender governance with the abolition of the family headship system.

1) The academic community generally calls "Relatives and Inheritance" parts of the Civil Act "the Family Act."

2) Young-mi Kim & In-ja Hwang (2011), "Discourses on Gender Governance with the Abolition of the Family Headship System," National Policy Research Vol. 24 No.4, p. 125.

II. Background to the Abolition of the Family Headship System

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1. Concept of the Family Headship System

The family headship system refers to a system of the Civil Act prior to its amendment on December 31, 2007. The former Civil Act organized family relations based on the "family (家)," consisting of the "head of the family (hoju) and his family members."

The concept of family in the family headship system is different from that of the community of family life that exists in reality. Rather, it is an ideological and legal concept that comprises a patriarch governing the family and family members belonging to him. In the family headship system, the principle was to compose a family with a male patrilineal successor as head and center of the family.³⁾

Head of a family or hoju is a person who commands or rules the family registered in the Family Register and successor to the ideological family. Article 778 [Definition of Head of Family] of the former Civil Act stipulates that "a person who has succeeded to the family lineage or has set up a branch family, or who has established a new family or has restored a family for any other reason, shall become head of a family."

The family headship system was a system that perpetuated paternal blood lines that flow from father to son (generally, the eldest son), and again to grandson, from generation to generation. A person to become head of a family was in principle a male lineal descendant of the former head of the family⁴⁾ (the eldest son, second eldest son, and grandson). A woman to become head of a family was limited to exceptional cases. In other words, if there was no man to become head of a family, then a female lineal descendant (daughter) could become the head of the family in an exceptional and complimentary way. A

3) Ju-su Kim & Sang-yong Kim(2012), Family and Inheritance Law, Bobmunsa Publishing, p. 29.

4) Lineal descendants refer to blood relations that directly descend from oneself to son and daughter, grandson, and great grandson.

married daughter could not succeed head of a family because she did not belong to the family. If there was no female lineal descendant to succeed head of a family, then the wife and the mother of the deceased head of the family in that order could become the head of the family. Even if a woman had succeeded head of a family, the woman lost her headship when she married because she became a member of her husband's family.

When the Civil Act was legislated, the family headship system was defined as a headship inheritance system, that is, a system to inherit the status of head of a family. However, upon the amendment of the Civil Act in 1990, the headship inheritance system changed to a headship succession system. Though practical power was granted to head of a family at the time of legislation, the revision of the Civil Act in 1990 drastically reduced the power, only to leave the headship succession system nominal. However, the existence of the family headship system itself still had great impact on the people's gender discriminatory thinking and the overall family, social, and cultural sectors. The decision of the Constitutional Court in 2005 on the provisions related to the family headship system as going against the Constitution⁵⁾ and the subsequent amendment of the Civil Act in the same year eventually led to the abolition of the family headship system.

We will closely examine the problems of the family headship system based on the ruling of the Constitutional Court in 2005 on the constitutionality of the provisions related to the family headship system.

5) The Constitutional Court ruled that the family headship system as set forth in the Civil Act violates Article 36-1 of the Constitution that stipulates individual dignity and gender equality. The ruling was made with the purport that the provisions of the Civil Act should apply temporarily until a new system to notify and prove status relationship has been prepared. The Constitutional Court announced on February 3, 2005 and ruled 2001 Con.(1) 9.10, 2001 Con.(1) 11.12.13.14.15, 2004 Case (1) 5(combined).

2. Problems of the Family Headship System

A. Violation of principles for gender equality in marriage and family life

1) Family system to maintain gender discriminatory paternal lineage or patrilineal lines

Article 36 (1) of the Constitution of the Republic of Korea stipulates that "marriage and family life shall be entered into and sustained on the basis of individual dignity and equality of the sexes, and the State shall do everything in its power to achieve that goal." The family headship system, in principle, defined "family" as consisting of a male head of a family and family members subordinate to him. In other words, the family headship system defined "family" as an artificial group of family to be comprised and succeeded centering on male lineage. As a result, this system caused inequality and gender discrimination in family life, which should be entered into on the basis of individual dignity and gender equality. According to the ruling of the Constitutional Court, "the gender discrimination of the family headship system is discrimination rooted in the traditional images of man with dominant status and woman with subordinate status. It is also nothing but discrimination based on the fixed ideas of gender role."

2) Discrimination against the order of succession to head of a family

The family headship system discriminated against women by granting a thoroughly dominant order to man in succession to the status of head of a family. According to the ruling of the Constitutional Court, in the family headship system, "only because he is man, the son takes over the status of head of a family, outdoing his mother and older sisters; or grandson, a mere infant,

occupies the status of head of a family, outrunning his grandmother or mother. Also, “although an unmarried daughter can become head of a family if there is no son or grandson, it is impossible to maintain the status of headship unless she remains single through her lifetime. For she belongs to family members of her husband or father-in-law as head of the family when she gets married later.” The family headship system presumed the eldest son as a natural successor to head of a family and degraded women to the next order to succeed a family supplementarily or temporarily if there is no man in the family. This encouraged preference of son with a belief that there should be a son to carry on a family line. Such a belief became one of the causes for aborting baby girls.

3) Discrimination against the formation of status upon marriage

In the family headship system, a woman entered into her husband's family upon reporting her marriage. However, she did not establish a new family with an equal status to her spouse but left her parents' family to enter into her husband's family according to the legal system.

More specifically, in the family headship system, if a woman marries the eldest son, she enters into a family with her father-in-law as the head of the family. If the man she marries is not the eldest son, the husband establishes a branch family upon marriage and the wife becomes a family member subject to him. In other words, the family headship system defined woman as an inferior and passive being because before marriage she belonged to a family with her father or older or younger brother as head of the family, then upon marriage to a family with her father-in-law or husband as head of the family.

In this regard, the ruling of the Constitutional Court can be quoted as follows: “The legal system of the wife's entering the husband's family register has very wide and deep social and psychological impacts. Although legally it is

a mere change of families a woman belongs to, the change has highly important symbolic and psychological significance on the woman's social perceptions. That a woman's name is "taken from her family's register" and transferred to her husband's upon marriage means officially confirming her departure from her parents' family to become a member of her husband's family. Actually, many women are said to have suffered confusion or loss of identity when they reported marriage. This official confirmation of marriage internalizes a married daughter as *chul-ga-oi-in* (出嫁外人), meaning that a married daughter is considered an outsider, in the perceptions and minds of her family members. In family relations, a discriminatory and dichotomous structure of husband's family and parents' family is established. Such perceptions and aspects of family relations naturally lead to the ills of preference of son. When extended to social relations, they create and maintain a social climate of male dominance and abasement of women.”

4) Discrimination against the formation of status of child

The family headship system stipulates that a child, by birth, naturally enters into its father's family register. As an exception, only an unmarried mother's child whose father is a foreigner or unknown (unrecognized) may enter into the mother's family register.

After all, except for a few exceptions, the family headship system defines a child as a successor to the family on father's side if a child is born. As a purpose of the family headship system, the succession of paternal lineage is based on the gender discriminatory ideology that fundamentally discriminates between father and mother.

Also, such entry of a child into its father's family register does not reflect the realities in which families change, including an increase in divorce and re-marriage. This also led to a situation in which even if the mother takes care of the child after divorce, the mother and the child cannot be in the same family register because the child entered into its father's family register. Even when the mother

raises her child for reasons of the father's abuse or sexual harassment of the child, the child cannot leave its father's family register as the father is head of the family.

B. Violation of individual dignity

The family headship system enforced, by law, all the people to belong to the male-centered family system, ignoring the concerned party's intentions. It also imposed the social status of head of a family regardless of individual's intentions. Also, in the system, the social status of all the people was determined in the hierarchical family order centering on head of the family, not as an equal being with dignity.

The decision of the Constitutional Court stated, “The family headship system views an individual not as independent human being but solely as objective or instrumental being for the purpose of maintenance and succession of male lineage-centered family. The family headship system one-sidedly imposes by law a specific form of family relations rooted in the ideology of maintenance and succession of the family while ignoring the wellbeing or choice of the parties involved in marriage and family life. This is in disagreement with the demand of Article 36 (1) of the Constitution that individual dignity be respected in marriage and family life.”

C. Failure to reflect changes in families and social environment

The family headship system is based on patrilinealism. The ideological background to patriarchal family system based on patrilinealism is Confucian thought of the Joseon period of Korea. However, this thought cannot be seen as a leading value and order of Korean society as Korea is an industrialized modern democratic country. Nor does it fit in with realities of the family communities today.

The ruling of the Constitutional Court said, "A family is now no longer an authoritarian organization which can be divided into a head of a household (head of a family) and family members subject to him. The family is changing to one with democratic relations in which all family members are respected as individuals that have character In the meantime, according to the differentiation of society, forms of family have diversified. There are not only traditional families consisting of parents and children but also a lot of families comprising a couple without children, families consisting of mother and children, and families with re-married parents and their children from previous marriages. Households with three generations or more, from grandfather to grandchildren, living together have drastically decreased in number. On the other hand, the proportion of women who undertake the role of breadwinner as head of a household has gradually risen due to an increase in women's economic power and in divorce rate as well." The ruling pointed out that the family headship system and family system is no longer in harmony with today's families in reality.

D. Sub-conclusion

As examined above, the family headship system has caused controversies over its maintenance or abolition since the legislation of the Civil Act. The family headship system caused gender discrimination in marriage and family life and went against individual dignity. The system was what legalized the ideology of family order based on the pre-modern patriarchal system that did not fit in to the images of changing families and society. This eventually led to the movement to abolish the family headship system, which proceeded together with the history of the Civil Act.

III. Progress of the Movement to Abolish the Family Headship System

1. In the 1960 after the Independence:
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1. In the 1960 after the Independence: Establishment of the Family Act and Beginning of the Movement to Abolish the Family Headship System

The abolition of the family headship system was a long-cherished project for five decades in the women's community.⁶⁾ With the abolition of the family headship system as its main content, the movement for the revision of the Family Act dated back to the time of enactment of the Civil Act (enacted on February 22, 1958, enforced on January 1, 1960). From this time on, the movement of a long journey toward the abolition of the family headship system has continued under the leadership of the women's community.

The movement for the abolition of the family headship system originated from the movement to amend the Family Act led by the Korea Legal Aid Center for Family Relations. The Korea Legal Aid Center for Family Relations (The Legal Aid Center for Women, when established) was established in 1956 by Dr. Tae-Yeong Lee, Korea's first woman lawyer.

Bae-hee Gwak, director of the Korea Legal Aid Center for Family Relations, recalled the beginning of the movement for the amendment of the Family Act by the Korea Legal Aid Center for Family Relations in the interview with Naeil Newspaper dated on March 8, 2005.

“We noted that the family headship system was an excuse to leave women's suppressed lives alone. We thought that women could have a better life if woman and man became equal in the Family Act, which ruled duties, roles, and responsibilities between family members. This thought prompted us to begin the Family Act amendment movement.”⁷⁾

6) The Presidential Commission on Policy Planning (2008), Abolition of the Family Headship System: Going beyond the Barrier of the Family Headship System toward an Equal World, Participatory Government Policy Report 2-27, p.15.

7) Naeil Newspaper, Article dated on March 8, 2005

<http://news.naver.com/main/read.nhn?mode=LSD&mid=sec&sid1=102&oid=086&aid=0>

As the first achievement of the earnest movement for the revision of the Family Act, the first amendment of the Civil Act was made in December 1962. One of the main contents of the first amendment related to the family headship system was the establishment of the legal branch family system if the second son married. This was to reflect changes in the family system from extended family to nuclear family in the Civil Act. After all, this was an aspect to show that "family" in the family headship system weakened.⁸⁾

2. In the 1970s: Beginning of Alliance of Pan-Women's Groups to Abolish the Family Headship System

Entering the 1970s, women's NGOs began to form alliance to make concerted efforts to abolish gender discriminatory elements from the Family Act. In 1973, led by the Korea Legal Aid Center for Family Relations, 61 women's groups united to form the "Pan-Women's Meeting to Facilitate the Revision of the Family Act."⁹⁾

The Pan-Women's Meeting to Facilitate the Revision of the Family Act presented 10 major guidelines for the amendment of the Family Act. Of the guidelines, "abolition of the family headship system" was included as the first priority. That is to say that the family headship system was the most serious and crucial gender discriminatory system in the Family Act and the first priority agenda to be revised. Therefore, women leaders put united efforts in conducting a nationwide sign-up movement for the revision of the Family Act.

In July and October 1973, the Pan-Women's Meeting to Facilitate the

000015120 (search date: March 13, 2015).

8) Gyeong-sook Bae & Geum-sook Choi (2006), Lecture on Family and Inheritance Law, Dai-Ichi Hoki Co., LTD, p. 26.

9) The Presidential Commission on Policy Planning (2008), p. 16.

III. Progress of the Movement to Abolish the Family Headship System ••• 19

Revision of the Family Act sent the ten major guidelines and recommendations for the amendment of the Family Act, including the abolition of the family headship system, to the President, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, the Prime Minister, the Minister of Justice, the Minister of Government Legislation, representative of each political party, the Bar Association, and news outlets and broadcasting services. Then, the pan-women's organization conducted a full-scale movement for the revision of the Family Act, preparing a revision bill and holding promotional meetings and public hearings.¹⁰⁾

In the 1970s, “international changes had great impact on the amendment. In 1975, the United Nations decided "United Nations Decade for Women" (1976-1985) and exercised influence on member countries during this period to amend gender in equal legal systems.”¹¹⁾

As a result of these concerted efforts of the women's groups, the second amendment of the Civil Act was made on December 31, 1977 to reduce gender discriminatory provisions and patriarchal elements in the Family Act. Regrettably, however, there was no change in the area related to the abolition of the family headship system. About the amendment at that time, El-lim Kim (1991: 229) assessed that “it was a mere 'make-shift and compromising measure' without any satisfactory achievement due to the strong opposition from conservative forces in Korean society¹²⁾.” Despite these limitations, the amendment of 1977 was the first valuable and significant footstep to improve the gender discriminatory provisions in the Family Act. The Pan-Women's

10) Tae-young Lee (1992), *The 37-year History of the Family Act Revision Movement*, The Publishing Department of the Korea Legal Aid Center for Family Relations, p. 152.

11) Geum-sook Choi (2013), “For the Policy Target to 'Become Women' from 'Women to Be Protected'”, Women News dated on Oct. 21, 2013. Contribution.<http://www.womennews.co.kr/news/64312> (search date: Aug. 17, 2015.)

12) El-lim Kim (1991), *Study on the Amendment of the Family Act and the Movement for the Amendment of the Family Act*, the Korean Women's Development Institute, p. 223.

Meeting to Facilitate the Revision of the Family Act, which brought this achievement, was significant as the beginning of the alliance of women's groups to abolish the family headship system.

3. In the 1980s: Full-fledged Movement to Abolish the Family Headship System

In the 1970s, an attempt at an allied movement was made by the Pan-Women's Meeting to Facilitate the Revision of the Family Act. Subsequently in the 1980s, the movement to revise the Family Act was carried out as pan-women's movement led by Korea's leading two women's groups, namely, the Korean National Council of Women and the Korean Women's Association United.¹³⁾

In 1983, the Korean Women's Development Institute (KWDI) was established as a government-funded institution dedicated to research on women's issues by gathering long-time demands from the women's community since the 1970s. In May 1983, the Korean government signed the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. In December of the same year, the Women's Policy Review Board was established under the Prime Minister according to the Presidential decree. All this laid the basis for specifically making policies and legislation on women's affairs."¹⁴⁾

In this background of domestic and international environments, the "Women's Association for the Revision of the Family Act" was formed on July 14, 1984. Chaired by the lawyer Tae-young Lee, the Women's Association consisted of 73 member groups, 9 affiliated groups, and the Korean National Council of Women as a sponsor organization.¹⁵⁾ The Women's Association increased

13) Young-mi Kim et al. (2011), p. 130.

14) El-lim Kim (1991), p. 226.

pressure on the National Assembly and the administration, conducted a million people sign-up campaign to make the purpose of the Family Act revision known to the public until the last stage of the revision.¹⁶⁾ In 1986, the association together with members of the National Assembly submitted a revision bill on the Family Act, but failed to reach the revision. As the 12th-term National Assembly closed its session in 1987, the bill was automatically discarded.

At that time, Confucian scholars and advocates for the family headship system began to hold intensive rallies to maintain the system. They "granted significance on the Family Act as the last guardian to keep the core value of Korean family, such as respect for ancestors and succession of the family, and criticised the revision of the Family Act as 'instigation of social injustice and national division' that would corrupt morals."¹⁷⁾

Meanwhile, in 1987 "the Korean Women's Association United was established with a progressive character."¹⁸⁾

As the 13th-term National Assembly began, the Women's Association for the Revision of the Family Act proposed a revision bill on the Family Act to the National Assembly as legislation of lawmakers on November 7, 1988. Under the united leadership of assembly women from the ruling and opposition parties, the revision bill had received approval from 153 assembly people, for the first time since the beginning of the revision movement.¹⁹⁾

"As such, the allied organizations for the Family Act revision movement came to consist of two women's groups, that is, the Special Committee on the Revision of the Family Act under the progressive Korean Women's Association United and the existing Women's Association for the Revision of the Family

15) El-lim Kim (1991), p. 226.

16) Hwa-soon Byeon et al. (2005), p. 98.

17) Hwa-soon Byeon et al. (2005), p. 99.

18) El-lim Kim (1991), p. 227.

19) El-lim Kim (1991), p. 228.

Act."²⁰) The two women's groups separately and jointly made all-out efforts to pass the revision bill at the National Assembly.

Representatives of these women's groups met with the chairperson of the Legislation and Judiciary Committee of the National Assembly, made public inquiries, met with chairpersons of the four political parties, and held a joint press conference to report the results. They also submitted signed letters from 300 leaders from each sector to the chairperson of the National Assembly, the chairperson of the Legislation and Judiciary Committee, and members of the sub-committee on the Family Act.

In 1989, an amendment significant to the women's community was made to the Constitution. According to the amendment to the Constitution on December 19, 1989, a new provision on individual dignity and gender equality in marriage and family life was established in the Constitution as follows:

Article 36 (1) of the Constitution of the Republic of Korea

"Marriage and family life shall be entered into and sustained on the basis of individual dignity and equality of the sexes, and the State shall do everything in its power to achieve that goal."

This was a significant achievement to secure constitutional grounds for the abolition of the family headship system. The above constitutional clause became the ground for the ruling against the constitutionality of the family headship system at the Constitutional Court. In this environment, the efforts of the women's community led to the amendment of the Family Act in 1989, but without reaching the goal of abolishing the family headship system. Nevertheless, the revision of the Family Act was a half achievement of making significant progress, in that the family headship system changed from inheritance system to succession system and that the practical power held by

20) El-lim Kim (1991), p. 228.

head of a family disappeared, only to remain in name. This unfinished success resulted from the fact that the revision bill was passed as a compromised one at the National Assembly due to the opposition from the Confucian community.

As the family headship inheritance system changed to the family headship succession system, the family headship system was left virtually in name. However, as the family headship system was still maintained, the abolition of the system remained as a task to be undertaken.

El-lim Kim (1991:229) assessed women's movement for the abolition of the family headship system in the 1980s as follows:

"Women's movement in the 1980s showed a clear change in nature as democratic movement grew in Korea. In other words, ideology began to ramify inside the women's movement camp, with a movement to specify each area and yet to secure solidarity by an organization of alliance.... As such, women's groups conducted their activity independently of each other and yet united together to carry out the revision movement because the revision of the Family Act was delayed over and over again. In particular, despite the differences in the scope of the revision of the Family Act and in their stances toward the reform of the laws and systems as well, they recognized the importance of the amendment of the Family Act. Based on the shared recognition, women's groups that had different ideological orientations gathered together to exercise diverse strategies and made united efforts to amend the Family Act. This movement was very significant in itself for the development of Korean women's movement, and the revision of the Family Act in 1989 could be achieved successfully based on such movement."

4. In the 1990s until 2002: Concentration of Competencies and Environment to Form Gender Governance

"While the Family Act revision movement from the 1960s to 1980s was a challenging strife in the authoritarian situation of the State, the movement from

the 1990s to 2005, when the family headship system was abolished, featured the key role of citizens through their voluntary gatherings along with democratization of the overall Korean society.”²¹⁾ Democratization and growth of civic movement were the two key words to define this period.

Entering the 1990s, the family headship system was drastically weakened to remain in name, but it still exercised unignorable influence in legal systems as a symbol of patriarchal system. Nevertheless, improvement of women's awareness and change in the family emerged as noticeable social phenomena.

Hye-young Kim (2003:38) said, “With the growth of women's movement and the entry of individualist lifestyle, resistance to and criticism of the family headship system began to be under spotlight as a system that strengthened traditional familism and functioned as a symbol of patriarchal family culture. This situation evolved into conducting the movement to abolish the family headship system.”

In this period, women's groups conducted more active and specific allied activities than ever to abolish the family headship system. Led by the Korean Women's Association United in 1997, they began to conduct the "Movement to Use Parents' Surnames Together." They attempted at the Movement to Use Parents' Surnames Together to reduce the cultural shock when they got to the main subject of abolishing the family headship system.²²⁾ This attempt to break, even if minutely, the thought of male lineage deep-rooted in Korean society had big social repercussions.”²³⁾

Subsequently on September 22, 2000, 113 women's and civic and social groups, including the Korea Legal Aid Center for Family Relations, the Korean Women's Association United, and the Korean National Council of Women gathered together to launch the "Civic Solidarity for the Abolition of the Family Headship System.”²⁴⁾ The Korea Legal Aid Center for Family Relations shared

21) Hwa-soon Byeon et al. (2005), p. 100.

22) The Presidential Commission on Policy Planning (2008), p. 36.

23) The Presidential Commission on Policy Planning (2008), p. 17.

24) The Presidential Commission on Policy Planning (2008), p. 36.

the same history of abolition of the family headship system, and the two above-mentioned women's groups represented conservative and progressive activists. Their gathering together with women's and civic and social groups meant that the environment and competencies for forming gender governance ripened in NGOs. Based on its trials and errors and regrettable historical experiences, the Civic Solidarity for the Abolition of the Family Headship System concentrated its competencies on one goal "to abolish the family headship system" in a highly strategic, specific, and proactive way.

The women's community and the Civic Solidarity began to recruit plaintiffs to proceed a lawsuit on the constitutionality of provision related to the family headship system. Then, in November 2000, they filed the lawsuit to their respective courts under jurisdiction to abolish the family headship system.²⁵⁾ In April 2001, the Northern and Western Branches of the Seoul District Court requested the Constitutional Court to rule on the constitutionality of the provisions related to the family headship system.²⁶⁾

With the launch of the Civil Solidarity for the Abolition of the Family Headship System, the women's community once again united for the all-out movement to abolish the system. As a consequence, in January 2001 the Ministry of Women's Affairs was newly established at the central government and the political situation of the presidential elections added momentum to the movement for the abolition of the family headship system. Young-mi Kim and others (2011) defined this phase as the first stage of the abolition process of the family headship system.

With the 16th presidential elections ahead in 2002, the issue of the abolition of the family headship system emerged in the forefront of the presidential election pledges. Then, with the inauguration of the Roh Moo-hyun's Participatory Government, the pledge for the abolition of the family headship system became

25) The Presidential Commission on Policy Planning (2008), p. 36.

26) The Presidential Commission on Policy Planning (2008), p. 36.

a policy agenda to be implemented by the government.

On May 6, 2003, then-Minister of Women's Affairs, Eun-hee Ji, reported implementation of the abolition of the family headship system to the Cabinet meeting. Minister Ji explained in the Cabinet meeting held at the Blue House as follows²⁷⁾:

"The Civil Act revision bill will be proposed as legislation of lawmakers this month. The revision bill contains deletion of provisions related to the family headship system, the compulsory provision of child's entry into its father's family register, the compulsory provision of child's entry into its biological father's family register after divorce. Also, joint cooperation is needed to collect public opinions on the abolition of the family headship system and to implement the revision of related laws. As such, we will operate a special planning task force with participation of the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Women's Affairs, the Government Information Agency, and women's groups."

As a result, on May 16, 2003, the Special Planning Task Force for the Abolition of the Family Headship System was launched and held its first meeting. As gender governance together with the government, the women's community, and social organizations, the Special Planning Task Force for the Abolition of the Family Headship System exerted its final and all-out efforts to abolish the family headship system. The efforts were finalized with the ruling of the Constitutional Court against the constitutionality of provisions on the family headship system on February 3, 2005 and with the historic achievement of the "abolition of the family headship system" on the Civil Act on March 2 of the same year.

Young-mi Kim and others (2011) saw this phase as the second stage of the abolition of the family headship system. They said that in this stage, a new environment was created with the launch of the progressive Participatory Government, and figures from the women's community became ministers of

27) The Presidential Commission on Policy Planning (2008), p. 22.

Ⅲ. Progress of the Movement to Abolish the Family Headship System ●●● 27

relevant sub-committees (Minister of Women's Affairs, Minister of Justice) and members of the National Assembly in large numbers. This environment provided opportunities to change the structure and interaction style of governance surrounding the abolition of the family headship system.²⁸⁾

We will take a close look at the experiences and implications of the activity of the Special Planning Task Force for the Abolition of the Family Headship System as gender governance in other section.

〈Table Ⅲ-1〉 History of the movement for the abolition of the Family Headship System ²⁹⁾

Date (YY/MM/DD)	Contents
1956. 8.	Conducted a full-scale movement to amend the Family Act, led by the Legal Aid Center for Women (currently, the Korea Legal Aid Center for Family Relations)
1973	Formed "Pan-Women's Meeting to Facilitate the Revision of the Family Act" (61 groups)
1998	Launched the "Citizens' Meeting for the Abolition of the Family Headship System"
2000	Formed the "Civic Solidarity for the Abolition of the Family Headship System" with participation of over 100 civic and women's groups
2001. 3.	Recruited plaintiffs to file a lawsuit on the constitutionality of provisions on the family headship system, led by the Korea Legal Aid Center for Family Relations
2001.4.	Requested a ruling on the constitutionality of provisions on the family headship system
2001.5.	The UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights adopted a report that recommended abolishing the family headship system to the Korean government.
2003. 3.	The National Human Rights Commission of Korea submitted its opinion to the Constitutional Court that the provisions on the family headship system went against the Constitution.
2003.4.4.	Mentioned the abolition of the family headship system in the business report of the Ministry of Women's Affairs

28) Young-mi Kim et al. (2011), p. 130.

29) The Presidential Commission on Policy Planning (2008), p. 19.

Date (YY/MM/DD)	Contents
2003.5.16.	Held the first meeting of the "government-wide planning task force for the abolition of the family headship system"
2003.5.27.	Proposed a bill on the abolition of the family headship system, led by assembly woman Mi-gyeong Lee, and submitted the bill to the National Assembly
2003.5.27.	Launched "Abolition of the Family Headship System 272," which is a meeting of 272 people from all walks of life, including lawyers, business people, actors, and broadcasters, to make one-to-one contact with 272 members of the National Assembly
2003.5.28.~ 6.18.	Declared a relay of people from all walks of life to abolish the family headship system Declared a gathering of 10,000 men, beginning with the law community, culture and art circles, and leaders from all sectors
2003.8.7.	The 6th session of the Special Committee on the Amendment of the Family Act under the Ministry of Justice resolved to adopt the status registration system on an individual basis.
2003.11.6.	Submitted a Civil Act revision bill to the National Assembly
2003.11.20.	The Minister of Women's Affairs made oral pleadings at the Constitutional Court.
2004.2.13.	The Korea Saemaulundong (New Village Movement) Center and the Korea Freedom Federation participated in the Special Planning Task Force for the Abolition of the Family Headship System.
2004.9.9.	The general meeting of the legislators of the ruling Open Our Party decided on an official party platform for the abolition of the family headship system.
2004.12.27.	The 1st Sub-committee of the Legislation and Judiciary Committee of the National Assembly made agreements on the abolition of the family headship system and passed a Civil Act revision bill.
2005.1.12.	The Minister of Women's Affairs met with the director of Sungkyunkwan (Confucian Academy)
2005.2.3.	The Constitutional Court ruled that the family headship system went against the Constitution.
2005.3.2.	The Civil Act revision bill that contained the abolition of the family headship system passed the plenary session of the National Assembly.

IV. Gender Governance for the Abolition of the Family Headship System: The Special Planning Task Force for the Abolition of the Family Headship System

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1. Domestic and International Environments as Background to the Formation of Gender Governance

A. Domestic situation

Domestic situation that enabled gender governance can be summarized as follows: First of all, women's and civic groups had already formed an alliance and organization based on the experiences of the movement for the abolition of the family headship system. Second, the Participatory Government, which had proclaimed the abolition of the family headship system as an election pledge and policy agenda, took office and selected the abolition of the family headship system for its policy agenda. Third, Korea's first female justice was appointed among nine justices at the Constitutional Court, who decide on the constitutionality of the provisions on the family headship system. Lastly, public awareness of the family headship system changed according to the results of the long-time movements for the abolition of the family headship system as well as changes in society and families. The details are as follows:

1) Alliance and organization of women's and civic groups

As examined before, the movement for the abolition of the family headship system became the strongest pillar in women's movement as time passed and emerged as a main issue to unite all the women's community together with the development of women's groups and women's movement. Furthermore, not only as an issue of women's movement but as a goal for the women's community and civic groups, the abolition of the family headship system provided a direction for them to concentrate their competencies on forming alliance and organization. What should be noted here is that these women's and civic groups could achieve solidarity to combine progressive and conservative forces. Such

alliance and organization of women's and civic groups laid a main groundwork for uniting their forces as gender governance.

2) Launch of the Participatory Government and selecting the abolition of the family headship system for its policy agenda

As a pledge for the 16th presidential elections, the abolition of the family headship system was selected for the key policy agenda with the launch of the Participatory Government. This meant that the movement for the abolition of the family headship system made progress from the situation in which women's and civic groups called for the abolition to the National Assembly and the government to one in which the issue became the government's policy agenda. Therefore, the government began to play a pivotal role in abolishing the family headship system. The Participatory Government's will act as a main factor for the issue to gain momentum as the government adopted and implemented the issue as a policy agenda. In the Participatory Government, the Ministry of Women's Affairs undertook the implementation of the key national agenda called the abolition of the family headship system. The Minister of Women's Affairs reported implementation of the abolition of the family headship system to the Cabinet meeting and began to implement the policy agenda on a full scale. In the meantime, the abolition of the family headship system was an agenda that could not be implemented by one ministry alone. Instead, government-wide or intergovernmental cooperation was essential for the implementation. Very significantly, as the issue of abolition of the family headship system became the government's key national agenda, intergovernmental cooperation became possible. In particular, when the Ministry of Justice was in charge of the revision of the Civil Act to abolish provisions on the family headship system, the government appointed female Minister of Justice for the first time in Korean history. This enabled the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Women's

Affairs to cooperate in implementing the policy on the abolition of the family headship system with the first priority. Accordingly, at the government level, the abolition of the family headship system gained great momentum. The Ministry of Justice added momentum to the abolition of the family headship system by organizing the "Special Committee on the Revision of the Family Act."

"Despite differences in opinions between ministries, the Minister of Women's Affairs and the Minister of Justice agreed in their opinion. The Minister of Women's Affairs, Eun-hee Ji, and the Minister of Justice, Geum-sil Kang, talked with other on the phone and agreed to have the Special Planning Task Force for the Abolition of the Family Headship System to filter the draft of the Ministry of Justice..... The agreement on key points between the ministers could resolve the entangled problem at a single stroke." ³⁰⁾

Furthermore, the government faced up to the necessity of gender governance to abolish the family headship system and took lead in that matter. The Participatory Government policy report (2008) by the Presidential Commission on Policy Planning describes the issue as follows³¹⁾:

"Abolition of the family headship system is an issue over which the women's community has contended for decades. As such, it is a topic that has attracted great public interest. Therefore, abolition of the family headship system needs to be implemented together by the government and social organizations including the women's groups. The proposition of the necessity that the government and civic groups should cooperate hand in hand was incorporated in the implementing process of abolition of the family headship system."

Against this backdrop, the Special Planning Task Force for the Abolition of the Family Headship System, comprising the government and civic groups, came into being with one goal of abolishing the family headship system.

30) The Presidential Commission on Policy Planning (2008), p. 27.

31) The Presidential Commission on Policy Planning (2008), p. 19.

3) Appointment of Korea's first female justice at the Constitutional Court

Abolition of the family headship system was too heavy a task to be achieved by the movement of civic groups alone or by the will of one government ministry alone. The situation at that time was that the constitutionality of provisions of the Civil Act related to the family headship system depended on the ruling of the Constitutional Court.

In 2003, Korea's first female justice was appointed at the Constitutional Court, which consisted of nine justices. Since its establishment, the Constitutional Court had been composed of men only. The appointment of the first female justice in Korean history had significant meaning in that a gender perspective could be reflected in the ruling process of the Constitutional Court. Since the request for ruling the constitutionality of the family headship system was made in 2001, the case had been pending at the Constitutional Court until 2005 when the ruling was sentenced on the provisions that they went against the Constitution. As per the legal saying that “the judge talks with the ruling,” Korea's first female justice accomplished her historic mission with the ruling of the Constitutional Court. Such ruling of the Constitutional Court was a historic decision that gave victory to decades of the movement for the abolition of the family headship system.

4) Change in public awareness

The long-time efforts of women's and civic groups began to bring change in public awareness of the abolition of the family headship system. Before the formation of the Special Planning Task Force for the Abolition of the Family Headship System, women's and civic groups led by the Civic Solidarity for the Abolition of the Family Headship System carried out movements to build a national consensus through public relations and sign-up campaigns targeting

local residents, students, and office workers as well as through education on the issue of the family headship system.³²⁾

The public relations and education activity to form a national consensus on the abolition of the family headship system were conducted by women's and civic groups with vigor. Subsequently, these public relations and education became main activities of gender governance by the Special Planning Task Force for the Abolition of the Family Headship System, in cooperation with the government and private organizations. Eventually, these activities laid the basis for minimizing controversies over the abolition of the family headship system, for a new system after the abolition, and for the public's acceptance of the new system.

B. International situation

Not only domestically but also internationally, Korea's family headship system has been recognized and pointed out as going against women's human rights.

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1979 "obliges its member countries to undertake a series of measures to incorporate women's rights in their legal system, to abolish all discriminatory customs and practices, and to end discrimination against women in political, public, international, educational, economic, and social life, marriage, family life and health. In addition, the members should ensure rights to gender equality, end discrimination against women in rural and fishing villages, ensure their rights and equality before law, and secure equal rights between men and woman in civil cases."³³⁾

South Korea made reservations on some provisions for the reasons of the family headship system in the Civil Act in 1984 when it joined and ratified the

32) The Ministry of Women's Affairs (2005), White Paper on the Abolition of the Family Headship System, p. 10.

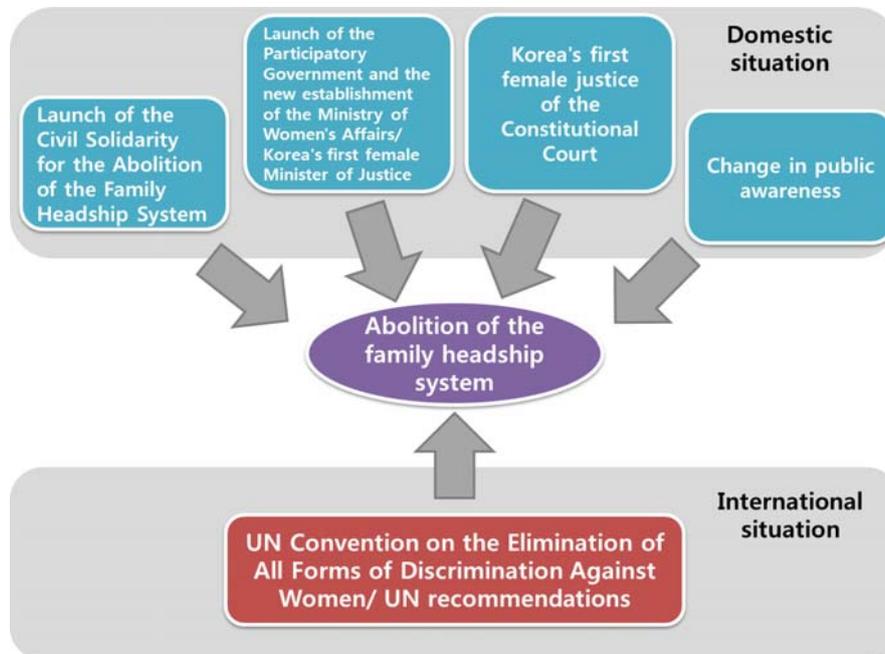
33) The Presidential Commission on Policy Planning (2008), p. 3.

Convention. Specifically, Article 16 (1) of the Convention defines that "women will have the same personal rights as husband and wife, including with regard to choice of family name, profession, and occupation" but the Korean government made reservations on this provision. Of Article 16 (1) of the Convention, the same rights and responsibilities during marriage and on its dissolution, the same rights and responsibilities as parents regarding children, and the same rights and responsibilities with regard to protection of children and management of their property as guardian were ensured as the revised Civil Act took effect in 1991.³⁴⁾ However, of Article 16 (1) of the Convention, the same rights with regard to choice of family name, which was closely related to the abolition of the family headship system, still remained unresolved even in 2000 for the reason that it went against Korean laws.

In the meantime, the UN Commission on Human rights pointed out in its report on the situation of human rights in November 1999 that the Korean government's family headship system reinforced patriarchal system. In May 2001, the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights pointed out in its assessment of the second report on the Korean government's implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights that "the family headship system was a major concern."³⁵⁾

34) The Presidential Commission on Policy Planning (2008), p. 3.

35) The Ministry of Women's Affairs (2005), p. 6.



[Figure IV-1] Domestic and international situations when the Family Headship System was abolished

2. Composition of the Special Planning Task Force for the Abolition of the Family Headship System

On May 6, 2003, an agreement was made in the Cabinet meeting to form and operate the Special Planning Task Force for the Abolition of the Family Headship System with participation of related ministries and civic and social groups. Then the Special Planning Task Force for the Abolition of the Family Headship System was formed with participation of seven ministries and 11³⁶⁾ women's and civic groups. The composition of the task force was as follows³⁷⁾:

36) In 2004, two organizations were added to this figure with participation of the Korea Freedom Federation and Korea Saemaulundong (New Village Movement) Center.

- Participating ministries (7): The Office for Government Coordination, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Women’s Affairs, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the Ministry of Government Legislation, and the Government Information Office
- Civic and social groups (13): The Citizens’ Coalition for Economic Justice, Korea YWCA, Lawyers for a Democratic Society, Korea Saemaulundong (New Village Movement) Center, People’s Solidarity for Participatory Democracy, the Korea Legal Aid Center for Family Relations, the Korean Women’s Association United, the Korean National Council of Women, the Korean League of Women Voters, Korea YMCA, Korea Freedom Federation, Citizens’ Meeting for the Abolition of the Family Headship System, Korean Federation for Environmental Movement
- Research institute: The Korean Women’s Development Institute (KWDI)³⁸⁾
- Consultation body: The Supreme Court



[Figure IV–2] Composition of the Special Planning Task Force for the Abolition of the Family Headship System

37) The Ministry of Women's Affairs (2005), p. 13.

38) English name of the institute is the same as before but Korean name changed to “Korean Women's Policy Institute.”

Headed by the Deputy Minister of Women's Affairs, the Special Planning Task Force for the Abolition of the Family Headship System was composed of four branches. Each branch had the following functions.³⁹⁾

- General Planning Branch
 - Establish and coordinate plans for operating the Special Planning Task Force
 - Divide roles between the branches and monitor the situation of implementation
- Legislation Improvement Branch
 - Prepare a Civil Act revision bill related to the abolition of the family headship system and implement the revision
 - Research and prepare alternatives to family register after the abolition of the family headship system
 - Review other related laws and prepare measures for improvement
- Public Relations Branch
 - Prepare measures for public relations about the ills of the family headship system
 - Provide public information service on matters related to the Special Planning Task Force
- Public Participation Branch
 - Build cooperative network with civic and social groups
 - Persuade possible opposition groups and support legislation



[Figure IV-3] Composition of the branches of the Special Planning Task Force for the Abolition of the Family Headship System

39) The Ministry of Women's Affairs (2005), p. 13.

3. Activities of the Special Planning Task Force for the Abolition of the Family Headship System

〈Table IV-1〉 Operation and activities of the Special Planning Task Force for the Abolition of the Family Headship System ⁴⁰⁾

Date(YY/MM/DD)	Category	Contents of Discussion
'03.5.16	Plenary meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Planned to hold the plenary meeting of the Special Planning Task Force and branch meetings - Made plans for composing branches including Legislation Improvement Branch and operation of the branches - Prepared a Civil Act revision bill and directions for legislation - Prepared costs and time required for digitalizing family register (decided to report to the Supreme Court)
	Public Participation Branch meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Selected the Public Participation Branch - Methods of additional participation of women's and civic groups in each branch
	Legislation Improvement Branch meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Methods of notifying child's surname, family origin, and status (by family or one register per one person) - Matters concerning the additional participation of women's and civic groups in the Legislation Improvement Branch
'03.6.10	Public Participation Branch/ Public Relations Branch meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Matters concerning the public relations about the abolition of the family headship system <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepared related education materials and trained the education personnel • Made 124 animation advertising display boards • Consulting for private promotion firms to establish desirable PR strategies by target (by gender, by age) • Support for making TV programs and radio advertisement
'03.7.8	Plenary meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reported major activities of the National Assembly and civic groups - Reported the current activities of the Special Planning Task Force, including legislation and public relations - Reported the results of consulting on promotion strategies for private firms

40) The Ministry of Women's Affairs (2005), p. 14-15.

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Date(YY/MM/DD)	Category	Contents of Discussion
	Legislation Improvement Branch meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reported the progress of the Special Committee meeting on the revision of the Family Act under the Ministry of Justice - Plans for the future discussion of the Special Committee on the revision of the Family Act
'03.8.19	Legislation Improvement Branch meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The draft of the revision of the Family Act by the Ministry of Justice and schedule of future revision of the Family Act
'03.8.23	Plenary meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reported the research service results of the Ministry of Women's Affairs and the overview of the draft of the revision of the Civil Act - Reported the current activities of the Public Participation Branch
'03.11.6	Plenary meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reported the Civil Act revision bill submitted to the 16th-term National Assembly - Discussed measures for passing the Civil Act revision bill at the National Assembly and methods of public relations
'04.2.13	Plenary meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discussed implementation and public relations concerning the Civil Act revision bill <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Ministry of Justice discussed the current state of holding the Special Committee meetings on the revision of the Family Act • Discussed matters concerning the submission of the Civil Act revision bill to the 17th-term National Assembly
'04.5.14	Plenary meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discussed matters concerning the submission of the Civil Act revision bill to the 17th-term National Assembly
'04.6.25	Public Participation Branch meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discussed passing the Civil Act revision bill at the 17th-term National Assembly Decided to discuss details at the "Citizens' Solidarity for the Abolition of the Family Headship System" scheduled in early July
'04.11.5	Public Participation Branch meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discussed measures to respond to the National Assembly, including visit of civic and social group leaders to the Legislation and Judiciary Committee of the National Assembly
'05.1.13	Public Participation Branch meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discussed the status registration system announced by the Supreme Court and future directions for implementation
'05.2.4	Public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Explained the status registration system submitted by the Ministry

Date(YY/MM/DD)	Category	Contents of Discussion
	Participation Branch meeting	of Justice and the Supreme Court to the National Assembly
'05.3.8	Plenary meeting	- Summed up achievements of more than two-year activities

V. Conclusion and Implications

The Special Planning Task Force for the Abolition of the Family Headship System, which launched in May 2003, disbanded in March 2005 as the Civil Act revision bill passed the National Assembly and achieved its main goal to abolish the family headship system.

In the process of abolishing the family headship system, as many as seven related ministries and 13 civic groups participated in the Special Planning Task Force for the Abolition of the Family Headship System. The activities of the Special Planning Task Force were a historic experience of the achievement accomplished in cooperation with the government and civic groups.

"The unique composition and operation methods of the Special Planning Task Force for the Abolition of the Family Headship System minimized internal conflicts between the members of the Special Planning Task Force. As women's and civic groups practically participated in the General Planning Branch, the Legislation Improvement Branch, the Public Relations Branch, and the Public Participation Branch, they took responsibilities for implementing policies together. Of course, this further deepened trust between the members as a community sharing a common destiny."⁴¹⁾

The Special Planning Task Force for the Abolition of the Family Headship System emerged in the history of the movement for the abolition of the family headship system. Great significance can be granted to the Task Force, more than anything else, that it was the largest scale governance involving related government ministries and civic groups.

The movement for the abolition of the family headship system has long been conducted by the women's community throughout the history of the Republic of Korea since the legislation of the Civil Act. The voices of the women's community grew strong with the development of women's groups and women's movement. The movement also was in the same direction with social changes of democratization and promotion of civic group activities.

41) The Presidential Commission on Policy Planning (2008), p. 25.

By concentrating their competencies, women's and civic groups could form an alliance and organization. With the launch of the Participatory Government, this became the basis for building gender governance. The process of abolishing the family headship system spanned a long period, involved diverse citizen groups, and formed a network of various agents. In this process, the women's community played a central role in creating changes in civic groups, the legislature, the judiciary, and the administration. In this regard, the movement can be assessed as significant and valuable.⁴²⁾

That voices of women, the marginalized and socially weak, gained power as gender governance was a highly amazing historic, social, and political experience for Korea. The barrier of the solid feudal system called the family headship system, which had seemed absolutely indestructible, was dismantled eventually by the power of gender governance.

Among the activities of gender governance in the process of abolishing the family headship system, significance should be given to the fact that by combining progressive and conservative forces, women's and civic groups participated in the process and the ruling and opposition parties and the National Assembly shared the same goal to abolish the system. The issue of the family headship system had been recognized as a highly sensitive and conflicting issue between men and women, younger and older generations, and conservative and progressive groups. For this reason, it took a long time to abolish the system. However, over the issue of the abolition of the family headship system as a conflicting element, the women's community and conservative and progressive groups began to form alliance. As gender governance was established, civic groups with conservative orientation and with a majority of men as members eventually joined the Special Planning Task Force for the Abolition of the Family Headship System. The issue finally was recognized and accepted as a universal human rights issue.

42) Hwa-soon Byeon et al. (2005), p. 105.

It can be assessed that the acceptance of the agenda of the abolition of the family headship system by both progressive and conservative forces and by the ruling and opposition parties was thanks to the effort of public relations and social persuasion through gender governance. On March 2, 2005, the Civil Act revision bill on the provisions related to the abolition of the family headship system passed the plenary session at the National Assembly. The numbers of the votes at that time showed the achievements that such long-time effort had resulted in. The revision bill with the gist of the abolition of the family headship system passed with overwhelming approval from members of the National Assembly: 161 members voted for the bill, 58 voted against the bill, and 16 gave up on the vote.⁴³⁾

This was a highly surprising experience even if we consider that there were fast changes going on in the families in Korean society, which had Confucian tradition and culture. On March 31, 2005, the Civil Act revision bill, with the main content of the abolition of the family headship system, was promulgated. This was the moment when the achievement of gender governance became a law that was to usher in a new age.

The abolition of the family headship system was the result of systemizing the activities of civic groups in many areas into building governance and gathering the activities into one in cooperation with the government, which acted as a huge driving force.

Then-Minister of Women's Affairs, Eun-hee Ji, said that the abolition of the family headship system was significant as the victory of governance as follows:

"Governance is to understand the position of each other, although it's difficult. Because we had different opinions even when we sat down face to face, we had to discuss beforehand to find a feasible case. As the President kept placing emphasis on the issue, significance of the abolition of the family headship system lied here in this point. In this respective, I see the policy on the abolition of the family headship system as the victory of governance."⁴⁴⁾

43) The Presidential Commission on Policy Planning (2008), p.85.

The family headship system was an element of confrontation and conflict between genders, ages, and traditional and new values. The controversy over its abolition was a big issue that had huge impact on all the people and society in Korea. Throughout the history of the abolition of the family headship system, gender issues and activities were first led by the women's community, and then expanded to national activities of alliance that combined women's and civic groups. Subsequently, they became the government's policy agenda, and the government and women's and civic groups formed gender governance, eventually achieving the abolition of the family headship system. This case shows the role of gender governance in forming a consensus on controversial and conflicting gender issues in a society and coming up with solutions and alternatives.

44) The Presidential Commission on Policy Planning (2008), p. 88-89.

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