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Summary of Research Papers 19



# South Korea's Strategy on Gender Equality ODA in the Post COVID-19 Era

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ODA in the Post COVID-19 Era**

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# South Korea's Strategy on Gender Equality ODA in the Post COVID-19 Era

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## I . Introduction

### 1. Research goals and necessity

- Amidst the unprecedented global crisis of the Covid-19 pandemic, gender inequality is worsening. Consequently, it is likely that the achievement of SDGs will be delayed. The fact that a failed response to a crisis sometimes brings a chance for “build back better” highlights a need for international cooperation on recovery from the pandemic and the achievement of SDGs.
- In the face of a post-pandemic era, South Korea needs to create strategies and plans for global cooperation with a goal to contribute to a gender-equal and sustainable development across the globe. Since joining the OECD Development Assistance Committee in 2010, South Korea has made continued efforts to expand both the quality and quantity of its ODA programs. However, the proportion of gender equality programs in its ODA is among the lowest among

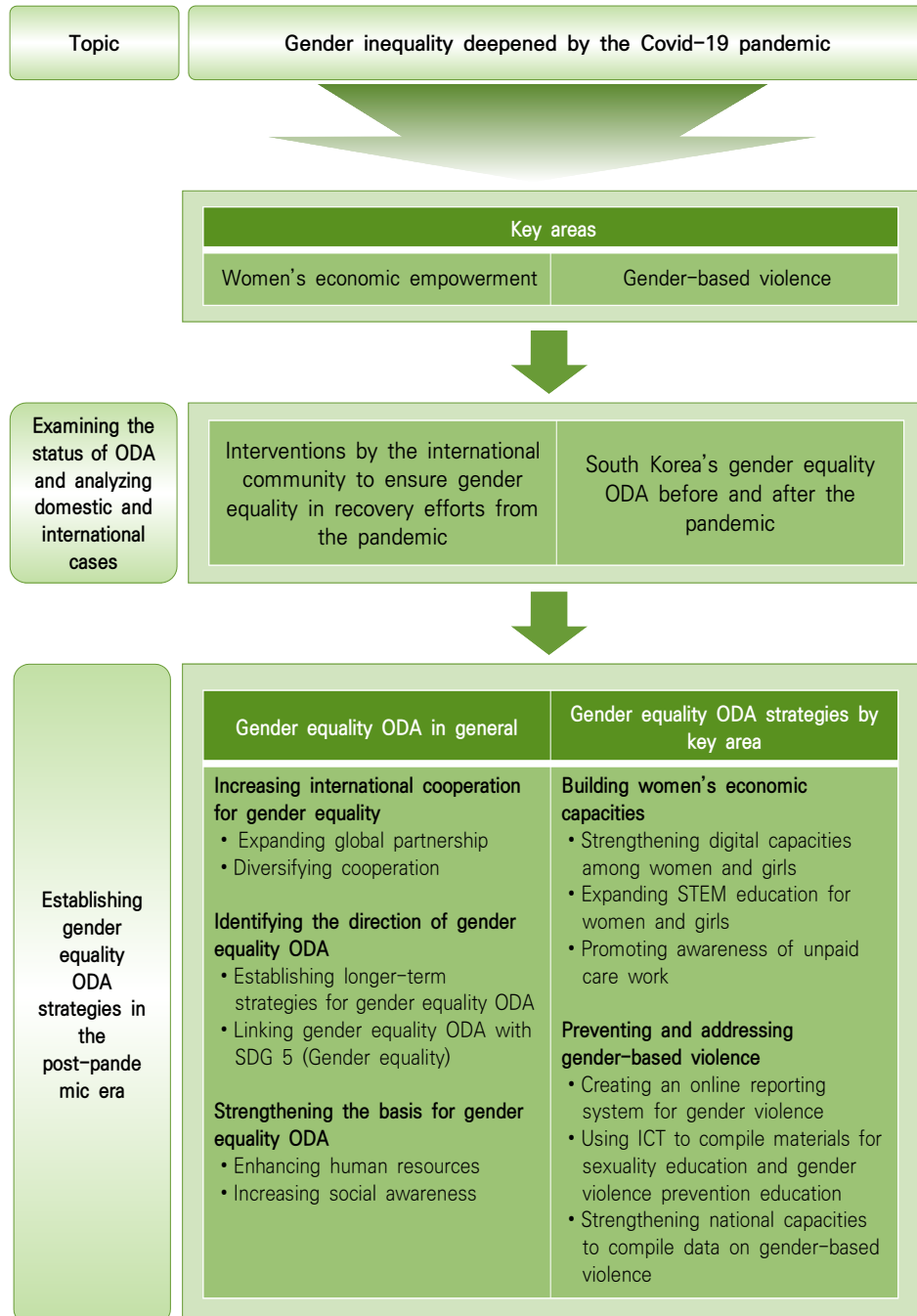
OECD DAC countries.

- Against this backdrop, this research aims to contribute to the establishment of strategies for gender equality ODA for a post-pandemic period, the achievement of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the global level, and eventually the establishment of South Korea as a leading donor country.

## 2. Research content and methods

- Research methods
  - Reviewed major reports and policy materials from both home and abroad;
  - Analyzed UN statistics related to the pandemic to examine the gendered impact of the pandemic and policy responses;
  - Co-hosted an international forum with the Institute for Security and Development Policy (ISDP), a Stockholm-based non-profit and non-partisan policy research institute, to share the understanding of major international issues related to gender equality ODA since the pandemic;
  - Conducted commissioned research in partnership with ISDP;
  - Held a workshop on case studies, targeting field workers at domestic ODA agencies; and
  - Conducted an expert consultation meeting with government officials, policy research institutes, and academics in the area of ODA policies.

○ Research content



## II. The Covid-19 pandemic and gender equality

### 1. The Covid-19 pandemic and global gender equality

- The pandemic had an aggravated impact on gender equality. In order to identify the impact of the pandemic on women, UN Women conducted research on two areas: employment and care work; and gender-based violence. The findings of the research are as follows.

Care work: a rapid gender analysis (RGA)	Gender-based violence: a rapid gender analysis
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• About a quarter of women and men lost their jobs.</li> <li>• The proportion of those who reported an increased burden of housework and childcare was greater among women than men.</li> <li>• Two thirds of men and women were concerned about their emotional/psychological health.</li> <li>• The proportion of those who received pandemic-related services and support from their government and/or NGOs was lower among women than men.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In the past 13 months, over 245,000,000 girls and women (15 years old or older) around the world experienced sexual/physical violence from intimate partners.</li> <li>• About 45% of women were directly or indirectly exposed to at least one form of violence against women. Women aged 18-49 years, unemployed women, and women with children were particularly vulnerable to violence.</li> </ul>

### 2. Gender-sensitive policy responses

- Both UNDP and UN Women used the COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker in order to examine gender-sensitive policy responses around the world since the pandemic. The findings were as follows.
  - Among a total of 4,968 pandemic-related measures, 1,605 policy responses were identified to be gender-sensitive: 853 were related to gender-based violence and 226 to care work.



- In this research, we compared South Korea's key partner countries with OECD DAC countries in order to view the status of developing countries. In terms of gender-sensitive policy responses, there was little difference between South Korea's partner countries (338 responses) and OECD DAC countries (346 responses), except that the proportion of VAW-related measures was greater among partner countries while that of social protection measures was greater among OECD DAC countries.

### 3. Case studies: South Korea's major partner countries in Asia

- We looked into the impact of the pandemic on women's economic capacities and gender-based violence, as well as gender-sensitive policy responses designed to mitigate the impact, in five partner countries that received largest amounts of aid from South Korea (Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Vietnam).
- The devastating impact of the pandemic was felt greater in Asian economies, which heavily rely on service and manufacturing industries, than in more advanced economies. Both service and manufacturing industries are concentrated with female workers and dominated by small businesses, which are often run by female entrepreneurs.
- While both men and women reported an increase in time and effort spent on unpaid child care and housework compared to before the pandemic, women still spent an absolutely greater amount of time and effort compared to men.
- Female workers were concentrated in traditional industries, which were hit hard by the pandemic. In contrast, STEM-related

industries, which were relatively pandemic-proof, had a very low proportion of female workers.

- Governments responded to women's employment crisis by providing financial support to small and female-heavy industries. Social protection measures were provided mostly in the form of cash subsidy.
- Since the pandemic, gender-based violence increased in all partner countries included in this research. In Bangladesh, about 93% of women were victimized by violence themselves or knew someone who experienced abuse.
- Along with an increasing use of the internet due to lockdown measures, online misogyny went up and so did online campaigns to support victims.
- Violence against women and violence against children are closely related. During school closures, violence against children, especially girls, escalated. School closures also increased the risk of girls becoming subject to early or forced marriage.
- As a response to gender-based violence, governments created policy measures such as enhanced victim services, public awareness campaigns, and data compilation. While statistics on gender-based violence were lacking in Asian countries in general, Bangladesh, Cambodia, and Indonesia began to compile data and information on gender-based violence at the national level.

#### 4. Implications

- While no societies and economies evaded the harms of the Covid-19 pandemic, the pandemic has particularly brought about gender implications. As such, governments from around the world actively sought policy measures to mitigate the harms of the pandemic. However, policy responses in developing countries, which were presumed to have been hit harder by the pandemic than their affluent counterparts, remained insufficient. South Korea's partner countries, in particular, fell behind OECD DAC countries on social protection measures. As to gender-based violence, they focused on immediate responses such as the provision of related services.
- Based on the findings of this research, we make following recommendations for the five partner countries. First, efforts are needed to remove legal, policy, and cultural barriers so that women can be economically empowered by possessing and using private properties. Second, there is a need to raise awareness of the implications of women's unpaid care labor and housework. In response to increasing gender-based violence, third, it is necessary to enhance services for the protection and recovery of victims, to strengthen the punishment of offenders, and to collect data on gender-based violence. Against the backdrop of accelerating digital conversion since the pandemic, lastly, governments should boost efforts to establish related infrastructure, strengthen women's digital capacities, and expand measures to address the negative aspects of digital technology.

### III. Strategies of the international community for a gender equality-focused recovery from the pandemic

#### 1. SDGs and gender equality

- The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a successor of the Millenium Development Goals (MDGs), which sought sustained and cooperative development at the global level. In terms of gender equality, the SDGs are an improvement from MDGs in that it aims to lay a foundation to strengthen gender equality and women's empowerment.
- Gender equality is a stand-alone goal (SDG 5) among the 17 SDGs and also embedded as part of other goals. Gender equality and women's empowerment are greatly conducive to the accomplishment of overall SDGs. The SDGs acknowledge that without a progress in gender equality, not only SDG 5 but the 2030 Agenda itself cannot be achieved.
- Gender equality ODA is critical in enhancing gender equality and women's empowerment sought by SDG 5. The proportion of gender equality ODA has continued to increase since the MDGs and remained stable during the pandemic. Some OECD DAC countries that are actively involved in ODA efforts attempt to link their own development assistance goals to SDGs.

## 2. Efforts by OECD DAC countries to achieve gender equality

- The achievement of gender equality at the global level requires not only the dissemination of norms such as SDGs but also the allocation of resources. For instance, the Gender Equality Policy Marker is a tool that enables the evaluation of the allocation of resources on development aid programs from a gender perspective. According to the OECD, 45% of all bilateral aid programs were Gender Marker 1 or 2 programs as of 2019-2020. Countries that prioritize gender equality in their aid programs include Canada, Ireland, the Netherlands, Sweden, and Belgium.
- A number of OECD member nations strived to establish and implement strategies designed to expand gender equality ODA and its effectiveness. In general, they created strategies for development aid or gender equality by reflecting changing environments around ODA programs affected by the pandemic. In the following table, the countries were grouped into four categories based on their responses.

Response	Countries
• Establishing strategies and plans in response to the pandemic	• Australia, Spain
• Creating tools and guidelines to establish Covid-19 programs	• Austria, Japan, Switzerland, United States
• Revising strategies for development aid and gender equality	• Australia, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Ireland, Iceland, Norway, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States
• Establishing feminist foreign policies and feminist development policies	• Canada, Germany, France, Spain, Sweden

### 3. Case studies on gender-sensitive responses in relation to the pandemic by overseas organizations

- Examples of gender-sensitive responses in relation to the pandemic by major donor organizations
  - Sida (Sweden) emphasized cooperation with local NGOs, which can respond to a disaster situation with greater flexibility. Sida employed various strategic measures and budget allocation to support gender equality ODA programs.
  - Like other organizations, JICA (Japan) experienced difficulties in implementing programs during the pandemic as it could not deploy its employees to the field. It introduced JICA guidelines on the implementation of ODA programs to recommend gender-sensitive approaches.
  - GIZ (Germany) has its offices in about 120 countries. Seventy percent of its employees are locals, who are greatly knowledgeable of local situations. The role of local employees is particularly valuable in emergency situations, such as the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Examples of gender-sensitive responses to the pandemic by international NGOs are as the followings.
  - During the pandemic, Oxfam acutely felt a need to invest in grassroot women's rights organizations that can work with locals. As a result, the international NGO introduced a women's rights fund to support local organizations.
  - In response to emerging forms of violence identified during the pandemic, Plan International partnered with local governments and ICT companies in order to develop policies to identify and report

online abuse.

- The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) responded to the pandemic through creative and innovative methods, including the provision of workshops and training over Zoom.
- Recognizing the increased likelihood that projects might be delayed and/or a need to change priorities in projects, ForumCiv allowed exceptions in regulations applied to partner organizations.

#### 4. Implications

- Support for gender equality ODA is important in the accomplishment of gender equality and women's empowerment enshrined in SDG 5. Some OECD DAC countries that are actively involved in development aid efforts attempted to line up the goals of their own development aid with SDGs. South Korea is encouraged to follow suit. Furthermore, a number of OECD DAC countries are establishing and implementing development aid strategies regarding gender equality with a goal to expand gender equality ODA and improve its effectiveness. In reference to these countries, South Korea should consider establishing development aid strategies for gender equality.
- The implications from these case studies are as follows. First is the importance of a strong partnership with local NGOs. One of the greatest difficulties that aid agencies experienced during the pandemic was their inability to send aid workers to recipient countries. In order to facilitate the effectiveness of gender equality ODA, it is advised to establish gender equality guidelines and to build gender-related capacities of those involved in ODA programs.

## IV. South Korea's gender equality ODA and challenges

### 1. Backgrounds and status of gender equality ODA

- South Korea has laid a foundation for gender equality ODA by introducing the Framework Act on International Development Cooperation and the Basic Plans and Implementation Plans for International Development Cooperation. Article 3-1 of the 2010 Framework Act on International Development Cooperation provides a legal basis for the implementation of gender equality ODA. Gender equality ODA is also included in the Basic Plans for International Development Cooperation.
- ODA implementing agencies have strived to include gender mainstreaming in ODA programs. Except for the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) and the Korea Economic Development Cooperation Fund (EDCF), however, other government ministries and agencies lack gender equality ODA policies and strategies.
- While the scale of South Korea's gender equality ODA has greatly increased compared to the past, it still has room for improvement both in quality and quantity. Relative to the steadily increasing scale of South Korea's overall ODA, the proportion of gender equality ODA has fluctuated. Since it is very small in scale, the total size of gender equality ODA is greatly affected by closing or scaling back large programs.
- South Korea's gender equality ODA lacks diversity as it remains to be concentrated on health and education. While nine organizations



per year on average have implemented gender equality ODA over the past four years, in addition, few carried out gender equality ODA on a continued basis. The small proportion of gender equality ODA organizations relative to the total number of ODA organizations suggests that a majority of organizations fail to include gender equality in their ODA programs.

## 2. Case studies

- As for women's economic empowerment and gender-based violence, gender equality ODA has been growing in the past five years. In the area of gender equality ODA, women's economic empowerment is considered a relatively priority area and its importance is being recognized.
- In this research, we selected two programs each in the areas of women's economic empowerment and gender-based violence in order to look into the details of the programs, including structural elements and implementation methods. According to the analysis of domestic programs, South Korea's gender equality ODA tended to have the following characteristics. First, they operate on a small budget. Second, the project period is greatly limited (e.g. a 3-year period). As for ministry projects, for which the corresponding ministry should receive yearly approval for project budgets, the short project cycle can become an obstacle in harnessing the full potential of the project. Despite an emphasis on partnerships with local organizations, lastly, the role of local organizations tended to be assistive to South Korean agencies rather than being a full partner.

### 3. Conditions for gender equality ODA after the pandemic

- South Korea's gender equality ODA implementing agencies reported that they had experienced small and big changes during the pandemic. Due to lockdowns and movement restrictions, they were unable to carry out their programs on schedule or had to modify them. Their workload increased as some programs were moved to an online space or they were required to follow public health measures such as social distancing, masking, and temperature screening. They were also concerned about reduced program effectiveness as programs were moved online, as well as the social and economic impact of the pandemic.
- As to strategies for gender equality ODA in the post-pandemic era, those in charge of ODA implementation suggested the followings. Given the increasing importance of ICT, first, ICT should be actively incorporated into gender equality ODA. Second, programs should be run around the field, especially in times for disruption in face to face contact. They also highlighted a need to develop longer-term programs in consideration of the social and cultural practices of local residents. In order to further promote gender equality ODA in the future, in addition, they suggested a need to promote gender awareness and capacities among those involved in ODA implementation, to expand cooperation among gender organizations, and to enhance gender mainstreaming in ODA.

### 4. Implications

- This section examined the backgrounds and status of South Korea's gender equality ODA by looking into its legal and institutional basis,

scale, and implementing agencies. It also discussed how the environments around the implementation of gender equality ODA have changed since the pandemic.

- The implications of this review are as follows. First, while South Korea has in place a legal and institutional basis for gender equality ODA, it is difficult to convey its purpose until implementing agencies develop and carry out programs. Continued efforts are needed to establish strategies in detail to promote gender equality ODA and improve its quality. Second, South Korea's gender equality ODA has yet to grow in scale. As the pandemic highlighted the importance of women's economic empowerment and responses to gender-based violence, the number of related ODA programs is on the rise. However, gender equality ODA needs to further expand into diverse areas in the long term. Third, policy support is needed so that a greater number of organizations can carry out gender equality ODA. One example of such policy support is helping establish a cooperative network among implementing agencies. Fourth, flexible administrative responses are critical in emergency situations, such as the pandemic, so that the changing needs of the field can be reflected in a timely manner. When establishing strategies for gender equality ODA, fifth, it is important to consider how to incorporate ICT into gender equality ODA and how to strengthen field-orientedness when operating the programs. Sixth, improving the quality of gender equality ODA requires continued efforts to develop long-term projects reflecting the social and cultural practices of the locals, to strengthen gender awareness and capacities among those involved in program implementation, to expand cooperation among gender organizations, and to achieve gender mainstreaming in ODA.

## V. Strategies for gender equality ODA in the post-pandemic era

### 1. Context behind the implementation of gender equality ODA

- Internal and external conditions after the pandemic

External	Internal
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Widening inequality threatens the achievement of SDGs</li> <li>• Gendered impacts are focused on women's economic participation and gender-based violence</li> <li>• The gap between developing countries and developed countries is widening</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promoting advanced development aid programs to contribute to the actualization of SDGs and global values</li> <li>• Presenting specific agenda under a vision of achieving global values and coexistence through cooperation and solidity</li> </ul>

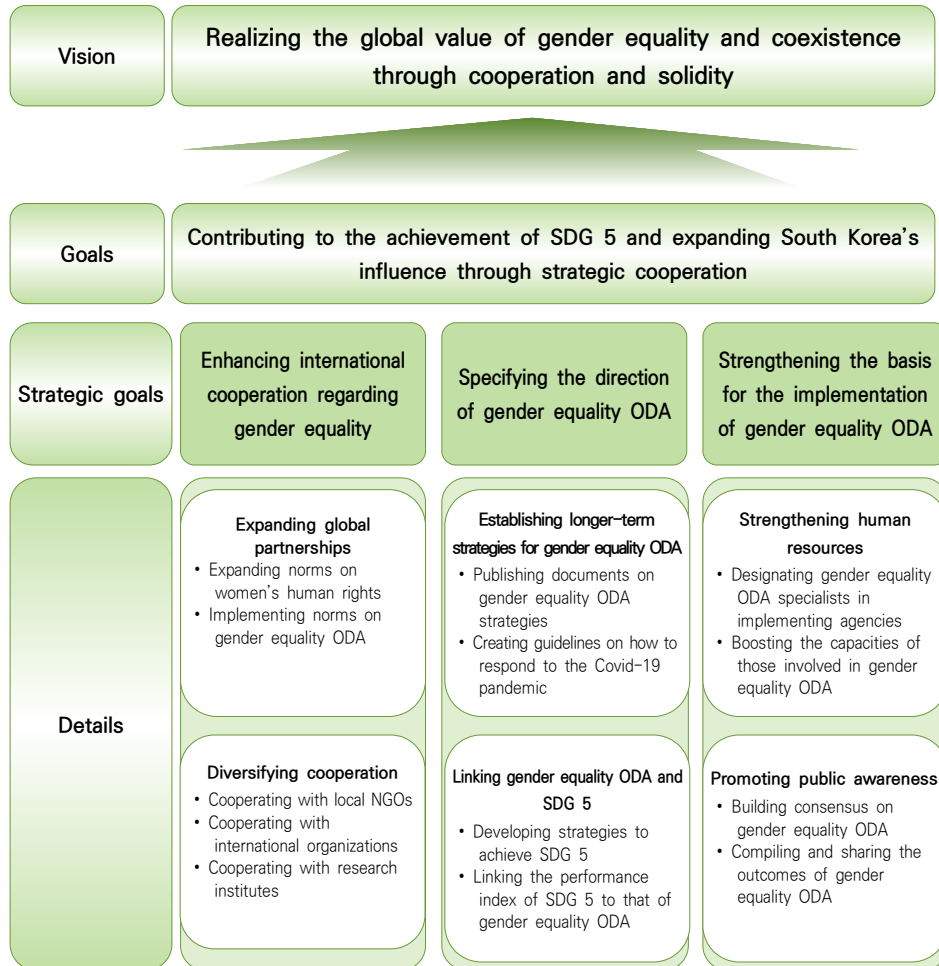
### 2. Status of gender equality ODA

- Strengths and weaknesses of South Korea's gender equality ODA

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthened legal and institutional bases for gender equality ODA</li> <li>• Gender mainstreaming in gender equality ODA implementing agencies</li> <li>• Improved quality and quantity of gender equality ODA</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of interest in and specific strategies for gender equality ODA</li> <li>• Lack of efforts for gender mainstreaming in the majority of gender equality ODA implementing agencies</li> <li>• Compared to other OECD DAC countries, the proportion of gender equality ODA programs is small</li> </ul>

### 3. Strategies to promote gender equality ODA in the post-pandemic era

- Based on the analysis of the status of South Korea's gender equality, we propose the following strategies for gender equality ODA in the post-pandemic era.



○ First, it is necessary to strengthen international cooperation and global partnerships regarding gender equality.

- For this, we suggest the South Korean government to actively participate in Action Coalitions created in the 2021 Generation Equality Forum. For example, South Korea may show leadership in the areas of its strength: technological innovations regarding gender-based violence and gender equality. It can also contribute

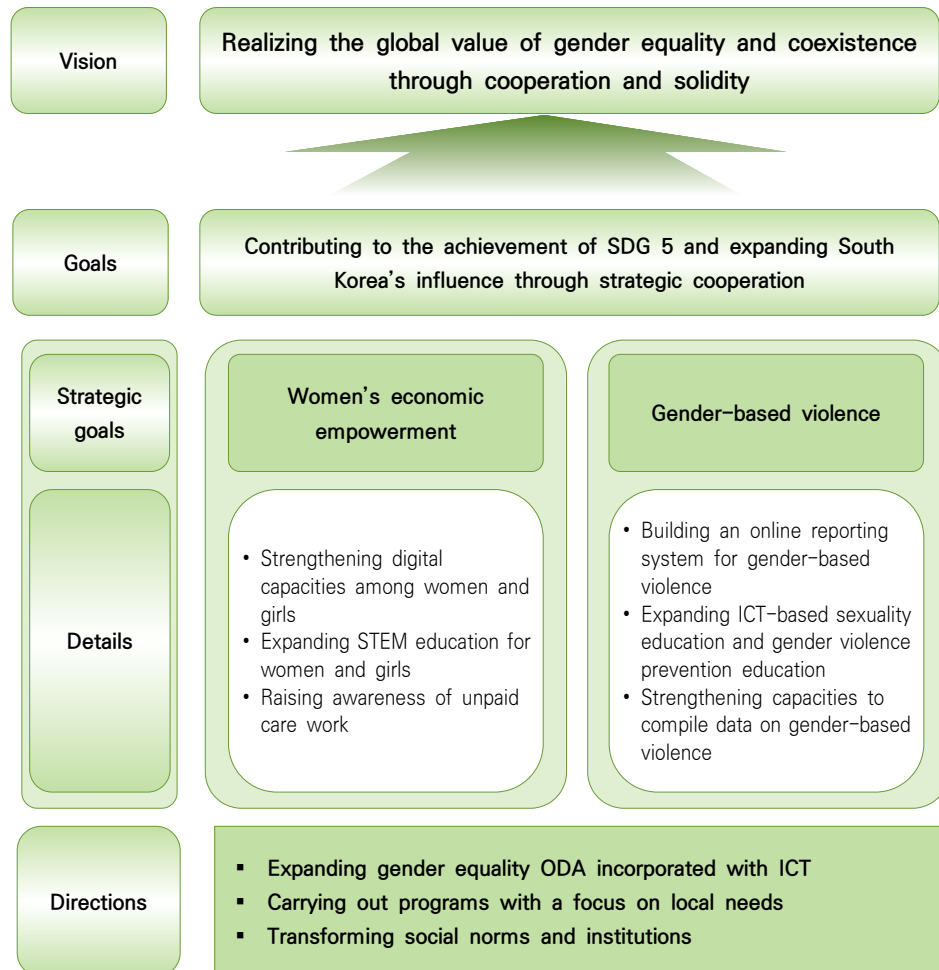
various resources including finance. In addition, South Korea may take lead in discussions on values and norms regarding gender equality among donor countries and allocate necessary resources.

- Furthermore, it is necessary to diversify cooperation with various stakeholders. Recognizing the importance of secure access to the field and evidence-based data to make available latest information, we suggest strengthening cooperation with local NGOs and research institutes. The government may partner with the UN Women Centre of Excellence for Gender Equality in the implementation of gender equality ODA, especially in the areas of global women's agenda, such as women's vocational capacities, gender-based violence, and peace and security. The Center opened in Seoul in 2022 and has expertise in education, research, and networking.

○ It is necessary to specify the direction of gender equality ODA.

- A majority of OECD DAC member nations have introduced strategies for gender equality ODA. Since the pandemic, most of OECD DAC countries established emergency strategies for gender-sensitive responses, updated existing strategies for gender equality ODA in consideration of the pandemic, and published specific agenda such as a feminist approach to humanitarian support. In contrast, South Korea has yet to publish strategic documents on development aid focused on gender equality. We suggest the introduction of policies with specified areas of focus, target countries, and budgets in regard to gender equality ODA. It is also necessary to establish longer-term plans regarding gender equality ODA in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

- Considering that gender equality is critical in achieving SDGs, we suggest that gender equality ODA programs should be linked to SDG 5. It is also necessary to identify the degree of progress in SDG 5 in partner countries and link it to ODA programs in order to improve program outcomes in a systematic manner.
- Lastly, we suggest strengthening the basis for the implementation of gender equality ODA.
  - In order to improve the quality and quantity of gender equality ODA programs, it is necessary to have in place gender equality ODA specialists in implementing agencies. Targeting those involved in gender equality ODA policies and program implementation, in addition, gender awareness and capacity-building programs are needed to facilitate mutual learning on gender equality ODA programs.
  - Since joining the OECD DAC, South Korea has made remarkable achievements in various gender equality ODA programs over the past ten years. It is necessary to compile and share related data and outcomes. We also suggest holding a nation-wide event to raise public awareness regarding it.
- Lastly, we suggest detailed strategies focused on gender equality ODA, especially on women's economic empowerment and gender-based violence.



Thematic category: ODA, gender-based violence and safety, work-life balance

Keywords: gender equality ODA, gender and development, the Covid-19 pandemic, women's economic empowerment, gender-based violence



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