

The International Conference on the Interdisciplinary Field of Gender Studies

Interdisciplinary Field of Gender Studies—APEC Experience Sharing

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The APEC's concern about gender issues is clearly manifested through their initiatives in developing the "Women Leaders' Network, WLN" in 1996 and the establishment of the "Gender Focal Point Network, GFPN" in 2003.

Recently, a symposium entitled "The International Conference on the Interdisciplinary Field of Gender Studies" was held at NTHU International Convention Center. The Conference, organized by the Foundation of Women Rights' Promotion and Development, was held under the supervision of the Department of Social Affairs, Ministry of Interior, the latter being the official communication channel between the Executive Yuan's Commission on Women's Rights Promotion. Mr. Lin Join-sane, Administrative Vice Minister of the Ministry of the Interior, was invited to give opening remarks. Hosted by the Executive Yuan's Commission on Women's Rights Promotion, international specialists and APEC members were invited to share experiences on the interdisciplinary field of gender studies.

Mr. Lin Join-sane, (Administrative Vice Minister, Ministry of the Interior, Taiwan)

The Ministry of the Interior is the department responsible for promoting women affairs in Taiwan. It plays an important role in driving gender integration among authorities. In Taiwan, under the collaboration of the Executive Yuan's Commission on Women's Rights Promotion, and other authorities, changes in laws, regulations and policies are introduced to accommodate the advocacy for gender equality among various departments and commissions. APEC is very concerned about gender issues. Through the APEC platform, members are able to map out the path forward to promote gender mainstreaming as well as raising women's status in economic terms. The steps taken have brought us closer to the win-win situation of attaining gender equality and economic advancement. We actively seek for opportunities to develop closer working relations with economic entities through participation in APEC. More importantly, we would like to further promote the notion by putting the Council's decisions into practice. Experiences shared in this symposium would certainly help us to better prepare ourselves in protecting women' rights.

The symposium started with the experience sharing by the APEC committee members on the topics of interdisciplinary fields of gender integration and the experience in Taiwan. Regarding the strategy to raise the economic power of women, the experiences from Indonesia, Thailand and Taiwan may provide some clues. While globalization is an ongoing process, economic development is not the only objective to be pursued. We should not neglect the importance of gender justice. We should together concern with the plight of female migrant workers in order to strike a social balance.

Thoughts and responses

Ms. Chou Ching-yu, (Commissioner, Commission on Women's Rights Promotion, Executive Yuan, Taiwan)

With the efforts of scholars, specialists and government departments, women's status has seen a significant improvement in the past decade. I believe women will be able to achieve more if the views, thoughts and angles of analysis are shared among nations.

Women's existence needs to be seen; women's voices need to be heard and women should have the rights to address their needs. The solution should be executed through legislation and corresponding government policies. A higher level of dedication between the two genders will help maximize the benefits. We appreciate that remarkable achievements have been made in the past; however, there are still many problems which will take a longer period of time to solve. We need to work together with persistence to face the challenges.

Mr. Luis Tsuboyama, (Program Director, Secretary of APEC)

I gained new insights from the symposium today. We think that Taipei has made great achievements in the area of "gender mainstreaming", compared to other APEC economic entities. In Taipei, each government department has two contact persons, one is male and the other is female. This is really appreciated. The rise in the conscious of gender is very important, thus we must keep on sharing our knowledge on gender within our country and with our international counterparts as well. I would like to congratulate all of you on the success of this aspect.

Ms. Rita P.S. Algamer (Deputy Director of Regional Cooperation, Ministry of Trade, Indonesia)

I am glad to have the opportunity to listen to these important reports and issues here. When I am back to my workplace and my country, I will advocate for more attention to be paid towards the interdisciplinary field of Gender Studies. The serious problems of foreign workers and domestic helpers should not be neglected. I hope that these topics can be considered by the general public.

Women are capable, but women have to work very hard to prove their capabilities and gain equal status as their male counterparts. In fact, what women need is an opportunity. We need to have more sharing for our experience. I hope to be able to participate in other sharing sessions in the future.

Moderator: Dr. Fu Li-yeh (Commissioner, Commission on Women's Rights Promotion, Executive Yuan, Taiwan)

Women's Participation in APEC

Mr. Luis Tsuboyama (Program Director, Secretary of APEC)

Trade liberalization, facilitation and economic activities and technology are all related to women. We hold the view that women play a significant role in economic development, especially in developing countries. Their work, though with no monetary values attached, has made significant contribution to the overall development. In 1998, the Meeting on Women (MMW) was held and the meeting agreed on the suggestion of "Incremental steps to improve women's involvement in decision-making." The theme and activities held by APEC focus on empowering women's ability to meet the challenges and to eliminate the hurdles and difficulties during the process of economic participation.

Gender perspective is integrated in APEC through different methods. It is composed of three key elements, they are: (1) Gender analysis, to identify and recognize the differences between the lives of women and men; to evaluate possible influences caused by policies; and to integrate gender perspectives into the implementation and evaluation processes; (2) Secondly, Sex-Disaggregated Data is gathered to identify the real and potential contribution of women to the economy; and (3) To examine the involvement of women in APEC.

On the third point, I would like to emphasize about the Gender Focal Point Network (GFPN). It is made up of representatives from 21 economic entities and the gender contact persons from different forums. Mr Tseng Chung-ming is Taiwan's representative. It acts as an institutional mechanism on APEC gender activities. The Women Leader's Network (WLN) is GFPN's advisory body. APEC is working hard for the integration of women in the economy and we would like participate in the process.

Interdisciplinary Field of Gender Studies - Sharing from Taiwan

Mr. Tseng Chung-ming, (Director, Department of Social Affairs, Ministry of Interior, Taiwan)

Taipei is committed to incorporate "Gender Equality" into both social policies and values. In the absence of a department looking after equal opportunities affairs, the Commission on Women's Rights Promotion (CWRP) assumes responsibilities on gender-related policies. In 2005, the Executive Yuan encouraged every department to assist in the implementation plan. Six tools are included in the plan; they are: Gender-Analysis, Collection and Use of Sex-Disaggregated Data, Gender Budget, Analysis of Gender Impact, Gender Equality Mechanism and Gender Capacity of Will. For gender statistics, the Directorate-General of Budget, Accounting and Statistics collects the information and announces the latest statistics on a regular basis. The Main Statistical Indicators by Gender and the Statistic Table have been completed and published.

For the gender budget, every department gathers statistics according to the plan. For the Ministry of Interior, the budget for women increases every year from 2003 to 2007. In addition, there are talks given by experts and guidelines to control the budget in all government departments.

Moreover, in responding to the advocacy of Gender Mainstreaming, we have reported the issues discussed during the APEC meetings to relevant parties, channeling the important decisions and highlighting the key areas for action.

Of the various indicators adopted by APEC, we have made considerable progress, both at policy making and implementation levels, in areas relating to Analysis of Gender Impact, Gender Equality Mechanism, Gender Capacity of Will and empowering women's economic status. This is a continuing process and we are grateful for your sharing and support.

Gender and the Economics – Advancing Women's Economic Participation

Moderator: Ms Ho Bih-jen, (Commissioner, Commission on Women's Rights Promotion, Executive Yuan, Taiwan)

I have benefited from women entrepreneurship. I was raised by my mother who was a businesswoman. There are different stories about women working hard for their fate during different periods of time. Women fight for their needs through different means. Women need more resources in terms of training for better utilization of their talent. The aim of the forum today is to discuss the opportunity and technology for women in the digital age and the various ways to further developing their talent so that they can become leaders.

“Research on Women's e-Business in Taiwan”

Ms. Wang Su-wan, (Vice Director, Division of Taiwan Economy Chung-Hua Institution for Economic Research, Taiwan)

Women's devotion to business is a new phenomenon around the world. They have become a new force in economy. However, women encounter various problems when starting a business such as financing, lack of a learning model, staff recruitment and training. Furthermore, it is difficult for women to juggle family responsibilities and career development. They often drop their career after getting married. E-Business has an advantage since there is no boundary for time or physical location. Therefore, the government should encourage women start their own business as well as cultivate their knowledge in e-Business.

According to a survey done by Taiwan E-Business, in general, female entrepreneurs are younger than males while the education level and scale of staff of male entrepreneurs are higher than females. Female entrepreneurs tend to focus on the service industry while males focus on manufacturing and professional industries. We suggest that gender differences should be considered in designing promotion strategies for the development of e-Business.

How to Advance Women's Economic Empowerment

Dr. Chonchanok Viravan (President, BPW International, Thailand)

Today, I am going to talk about the way of improving women's empowerment from another point of view.

According to the UNESCAP's Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2007, the cost of restriction on labour force participation amounts to US\$42 to US\$47 billion in the region. The cost of Gender Gap in Education reaches US\$16 to \$30 billion. The study reveals the high price the region is paying for gender discrimination. As women have invested more in children's health and education, the return from educating women is high and does have inter-generational impact. According to the UNESCAP, a 1% increase in female secondary school enrolment rate would lead to 0.23% annual growth in Asia-Pacific. A 1% increase in average years of female schooling would lead to 0.37% increases in GDP.

Business and Professional Women (BPW) adopts two strategies to help promote the empowerment of women. The first one is "bridge the gap" which helps women obtain economic rights through the cooperation between governments and NGOs. The second strategy is the recognition of the emerging issues for women in the 21st century. Capacity building is necessary but not sufficient to empower women economically in the 21st Century. Capable women are facing restrictions that limit their ability to reach their full potential and sustain themselves financially.

Policy makers and stake holders need to address economic empowerment of women under the conditions of migration, climate changes and ageing population in order to enable women to reach their full potential and sustain themselves economically.

Gender and Labor Mobility: Issues on Migrant Women Workers

Host: Ms. Erica Y.C. Wu (Commissioner, Commission on Women's Right Promotion, Executive Yuan, Taiwan)

Women's issue is really one of the major discussion topics in APEC. The 12th WLN Conference proposed women's benefits in the agreement on District Liberalization to the leader and management level conference. They even exchanged opinions with the APEC Enterprises Advisory Board on the part of migrant female workers. Obviously, this is an important topic in the Free Trade Agreement under globalization.

According to the statistics by the Council of Labor Affairs, and the Cabinet in 1996, the total number of foreign laborers reached 352,297 in Taiwan and women numbered 219,052 of which was 61.57% of the total number. Foreign domestic helpers occupied 45.55% of the total number. Foreign migrant workers not only substituted as low cost laborers in Taiwan, it is a concern in our country.

Some women migrate to Taiwan in order to get married. These new migrants cause many social problems in Taiwan. It is worth examining the degree of harmonization of cultural differences and the level of acceptance of these women into Taiwanese society.

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