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* The views expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of the United Nations.

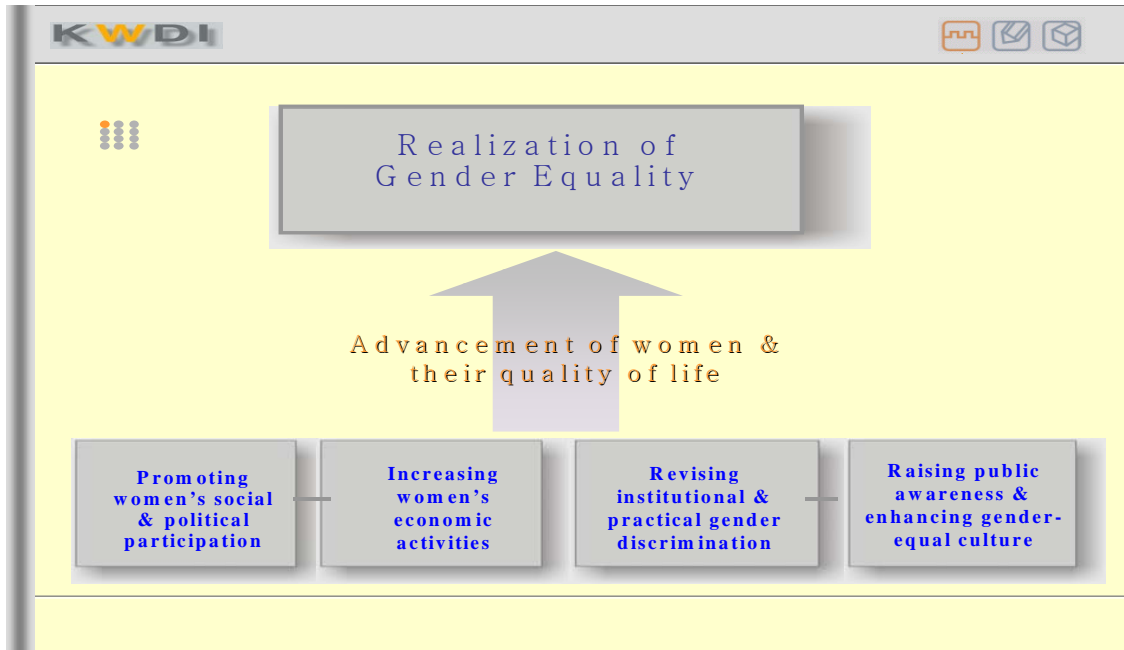
Research Institute as an Effective Tool for Gender Mainstreaming: A Case of the Korean Women's Development Institute



KWDI Main Building

Introduction

The Korean Women's Development Institute(KWDI) is a government-subsidized research institute promoting women's capabilities and social and political participation by carrying out comprehensive research on women's issues to develop gender policies and disseminating information. It is primarily preoccupied with practical studies and research findings are reflected to government policies. There are other national mechanisms for the advancement of women in Korea but this paper focuses on the achievements, gaps and challenges of KWDI to give some insights and emulative effects to other countries as KWDI is a unique research institute of its kind in the world.



KWDI Major Goals

Historical Overview

In 1983 KWDI was established under the Ministry of Health and Welfare as a national machinery to deal exclusively with women's affairs. It was founded on the idea put forward in the World Plan of Action adopted at the World Conference on Women in Mexico City in 1975. Under the impact of the U. N. Decade for Women, Korean women's organizations and women leaders pressured the government for the realization of this idea. The Government was receptive to this pressure. Owing to the advancement spurred by economic growth, Korean society could pay more attention to the question of social development in the 1980s.

In the same year, the National Commission on Women's Policies (NCWP) was also installed to perform the function of "channeling through," e.g., receiving policy recommendations from KWDI and others and, when it agreed, distributing them to appropriate ministries for action. As NCWP, meeting only several times a year, was limited its role to passive channeling through, KWDI started with multi-functions: not only research, but also other activities in such areas as education and training, cooperation with women's organizations, publication, and international cooperation.

KWDI has proven its *raison detre* undeniably in its contribution to the comprehensive legal reforms for the advancement of women: Mother-Child Act(1987), the Equal Employment Opportunity Act(1987), the revision of Labor Standard Act(1989), the Mother-Child Welfare Act(1989), the revision of the Family Law(1990), the Infant and Child Care Act(1991), the Punishment of Sexual Assault Crime and Protection of Victim Act(1994), the Women's Development Act(1995), the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Victim Protection Act(1997), Gender Discrimination Prevention and Relief Act(1999), the Act on Support of Women-owned Enterprises(1999), Special Law on Trafficking(2004). KWDI has played a central role of think-

tank in this veritable revolution. Without the KWDI's back up, the effective legislative identification of problems and solutions might not have been possible.

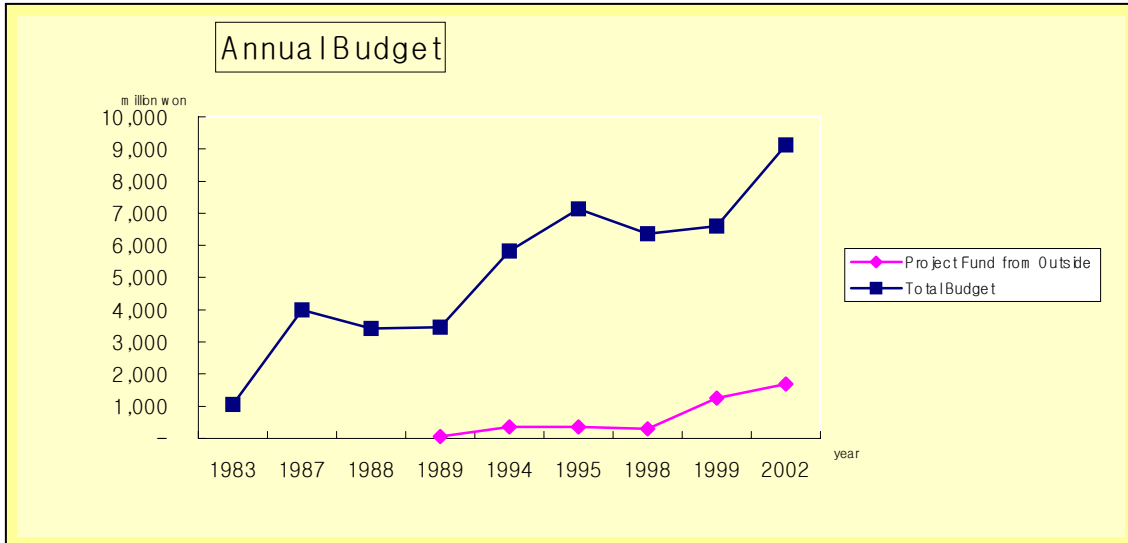
In 1988 a new national machinery was established at the ministerial level – the Ministry of Political Affairs(MOPA) (II). In 1991 the authority supervising and coordinating KWDI was transferred from the Ministry of Health and Welfare to MOPA (II). After the Beijing Conference in 1995, KWDI has exerted its efforts to mainstream gender by developing strategies for applying gender analysis, gender budget and gender audit, publishing Statistical Yearbook on Women, developing gender sensitizing training modules, and publishing and disseminating reference materials on gender mainstreaming.

In 1998 KWDI was placed under the Presidential Commission on Women's Affairs that replaced MOPA (II) and NCWP. In the same year, to increase coordinating capacity, gender equality offices were created in the Ministry of Law, Government Administration and Home Affairs, Education, Agriculture and Forestry, Health and Social Affairs, and Labor. In 1999 KWDI was separated from the Commission, and together with other government subsidized research institutes put under the umbrella of the National Research Council for Humanities & Social Sciences newly formed under the Office of the Prime Minister, and its function was reduced from multi-functions to only focus on policy research.

In 2002 the Ministry of Gender Equality(MOGE) replaced the Presidential Commission on Women's Affairs. In 2005 MOGE is expected to expand into the Ministry of Family and Gender Equality.

Achievements

As shown in the prominent contribution to the reforms after the mid-80s and the initiatives on gender mainstreaming, KWDI has played a leading role in providing practical knowledge and developing new agendas. This capacity of KWDI as an effective institution mainly comes from the difference with the Government Ministries and academia. In cumulative advancement of expertise, the Government Ministries are hampered by frequent changes of Ministers and government officials. Academia dances with fashionable theories, often lacking consistent attention to policy requirement. Having more than 50 researchers supported by the adequate administrative and research assistant staff, KWDI covers all areas of gender policy and its research outcomes are influential with an authoritative voice of accumulated expertise. Recognized the expertise, in 2003, for instance, KWDI was funded over 50 research projects by various ministries and local governments in addition to 33 KWDI-budgeted research projects. During the course of research implementation, KWDI researchers meet many times with government officials and the discussions on the projects have a mainstreaming effect by gender sensitizing.

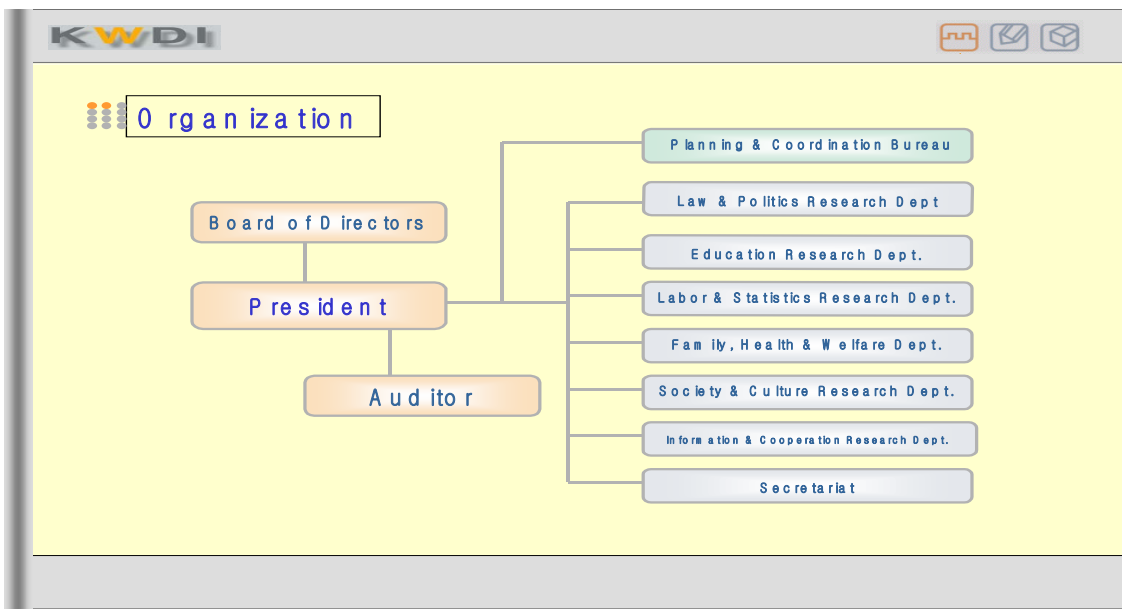


The KWDI's institutional advantage is also found in its semi-governmental character. Unlike government bureaucracies, it is situated in freer positions to strengthen partnership with civil society and international movement. For example, KWDI has been organizing policy forums participated by GO, academia and NGOs. The most recent forum was on "New Challenges for Gender Policy After the Beijing+10." KWDI has developed many exchange programs with international community.

Perhaps most important of all, considering the fact that pioneering demands cooperative endeavors of international movement, KWDI is favored by a sizable budget subsidized by the government. Having the total annual budget more than \$9million, KWDI could initiate pioneering projects at the international level. For the recent examples, KWDI organized an international symposium on "A New Vision for Gender Policy: Equality, Development, Peace" in 2003 and "Regional Meeting of National Machineries for Gender Equality in Asia and the Pacific: Towards a Forward Looking Agenda" in 2004, and will organize an international symposium on "Transforming the Mainstream: New Goals and Strategies" in 2005.

Gaps

Overall achievements notwithstanding, KWDI has suffered functional discontinuities due to frequently changing government policies on national machineries. Shifts in political climate and



government personnel sometimes propel abrupt structural adjustments. KWDI has undergone functional changes, resulting in the loss of accumulated expertise. For example, the government took over the functions that could be done better by KWDI, such as supporting function of women NGOs and Volunteers, education and training.

The multi-function mechanism enriches perspectives, entailing mutually reinforced research and practice. The functional segregation from practice means a loss of this benefit. Between a government ministry and a government subsidized institute, there exists a tendency of bureaucratic aggrandizement. Even at the level of ministry, MOGE wants to take over family affairs from the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, and to expand into the Ministry of Family and Gender Equality.

Challenges

As a government subsidized institute, KWDI has an orientation to the state. This state-centered orientation should be shifted to the more active involvement in good governance. The ties with partners other than central government are needed to strengthen. The aim of enlarging partnership with civil society, international and local community is not only to make gender strategy effective, but also to be prepared for possible regressive turns.

Institutionalization depends on contextual forces. KWDI is a product of the high tide in the 80s coalescing the impact of the UN-led international movement and the rising demand for social development accompanying economic growth. When the tide turns, however, a question could be posed of why the interest aggregation in the case of gender deserves a separate treatment, let alone a special attention.

Furthermore, with its focus on the equality between women and men, gender mainstreaming may ignore and be pursued at the expense of other human values of development. Without a holistic perspective, mainstreaming could be marginalized by antagonizing the mainstream. The regressive state holding the reins, the marginalization could become a pretext for marginalizing gender.

In order to go forward from the 20 years achievements to further progress, then, KWDI is faced with the two basic challenges. The new horizons should be envisioned to integrate gender in governance and to reformulate mainstreaming in the context of human development.

