



World Assembly for Women: WAW!2022 Concept Note

(Reference) Current Situation and Challenges Concerning Enhancing Awareness and Engagement of Men

In order to realize gender equality, it is necessary to emancipate ourselves from the gender stereotypes and the way of thinking "because I am a man, because I am a woman, this is how I should be" and to rethink how to assume responsibility in society for both genders. Considering gender equality could be an opportunity to review the way we have worked, how society works as well as the impact of norms, and to rethink work styles of all people and the evaluation system in our society, which would lead to our efforts to create a society where everyone can live easily.

Cooperation from men is also essential for women's empowerment. Hence, women are beginning to work with men to create new norms. For example, in 2014, the United Nations launched the "HeForShe Movement," which aims to promote all people, including men, to act for change in order to achieve gender equality.

In Japan, the "Declaration of Action by Male Leaders Coalition for Empowerment of Women" was announced in 2014, as well as the development of a system for male childcare leave, and the "30% Club" initiative to promote the number of female executives to 30% or more.

On the other hand, according to the World Economic Forum, if the state of full equality between men and women is set at 100%, the current global achievement rate is 68.1%, and it will take another 132 years to achieve gender equality ^(Note1).

In Japan, the Act on Childcare Leave/Caregiver Leave was amended in April 2022 to create an environment in which men can more easily participate in

childcare. The reason behind this change is that 37.5% of male full-time employees did not use the childcare leave system, even though they wanted to. The reasons cited were: that the company did not have a childcare leave system in place; that they did not want to reduce their income; and that the atmosphere was not conducive to taking the leave. In addition, according to a 2015 survey, 53.1% of wives continued to work before and after the birth of their first child, and even women are still hesitant to take parental leave due to concerns about their career path after returning to work and the balance between work and childcare, etc. (Note2)

While working from home and other flexible work styles have been largely accepted in the COVID-19 situation, the burden of women's unpaid care work has increased. At the G20 Ministerial Conference on Women's Empowerment held in 2021, it was also pointed out that it is essential to realize an appropriate work-life balance for women and to build a network for each of services such as education and nursing care. As dual income households become more common and family norms and values change, there is a limit to what women can do in terms of care work in addition to paid work, such as childcare and nursing care; creating the need for burden sharing. On the other hand, it is difficult for men to take on some of these burdens while the traditional image of men is maintained, and it makes it unrealistic for them to take on housework, childcare, and nursing care on top of the short time they spend at home due to overtime work. Forcing men to sleep less will lead to lower productivity and even cause physical and mental health problems.

Furthermore, further efforts are needed in local areas to eliminate the deep-seated gender stereotypes. The Government of Japan is working to strengthen and enhance the functions of gender equality centers throughout the country, and not only supporting the efforts of local governments, but also encouraging local companies and medium- and small-scale business owners.

To set themselves free from stereotypes about gender roles, perhaps the first step is that men and women begin to reassess each other's role that they have taken on. For this purpose, it is necessary to involve men in efforts toward gender equality. At previous WAW! meetings, good practices were shared in which worlds by male leaders changed the environment and made it easier for women

to work. Another one is male leaders have brought women up to the decision-making level, which has resulted in positive change. In order to further increase men's awareness and involvement in efforts toward gender equality, it is also important to foster an enabling environment that includes the installation of facilities for infants in men's restrooms and a review of evaluations for excessive services and long working hours.

At the WAW! 2022, we will further discuss what kind of environment needs to be created to increase men's awareness and engagement in efforts toward gender equality, and what kind of evaluation methods are appropriate to create a society where everyone can live easily.

(Note1) [World Economic Forum 2022, “Global Gender Gap Report Insight Report 2022”](#) p.13

(Note2) [国立社会保障・人口問題研究所, “第 15 回出生動向基本調査\(結婚と出産に関する全国調査\)”](#) (Japanese)