

## *CEDAW Experiences in Taiwan: Towards Universal Application*

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Presented at the Side Event on “Universal Application of CEDAW”

15 October 2012, Geneva

Hosted by World YWCA, WWSF and the NGO CSW – Geneva

### **Introduction**

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) is an international convention adopted in 1979 by the United Nations General Assembly. Illustrating that all gender shall share the same rights on economy, social life, culture and civil liberty and politics, it establishes an agenda of action for putting an end to sex based discrimination. States ratifying the Convention are required to enshrine gender equality into their domestic legislation, repeal all discriminatory provisions in their laws, and enact new provisions to guard against the discrimination against women and ensure gender equality on education, employment, health care, family life, politics, law, social and economic status.

The Convention is described as an international Bill of Rights for women and for all countries around the world, not limited to the United Nations Member States, accede to the treaty. The Convention came into force in 1981, and has been signed and ratified by 187 countries.

### **YWCA History with CEDAW**

The 2007 World YWCA Council adopted a Resolution encouraging its member associations to take actions to raise awareness on CEDAW and to encourage governments, to ratify, domesticate and implement this treaty. We were also later invited to share best practices and learn from each in the Asia regional meeting.

Today I want to share with you our experience in Taiwan. The YWCA and many other women's organisations strongly advocated for our government to adopt a law to domesticate CEDAW. Although we are not a member of the United Nations, women and girls in my country want to enjoy the same human rights standards like their sisters around the world.

After the 2007, World YWCA Council, some CEDAW Committee members and experts from other countries were invited to Taiwan. They shared the history and development of CEDAW. Their contributions helped the women's organisations to take practical actions to make CEDAW a reality in our programmes and our lives; helping the organisations to advocate with governments. As a result, my country passed a law to domesticate CEDAW, and many NGOs like the YWCA helped to advance this treaty.

### **YWCA Taiwan's Programme: *Women Immigrants & CEDAW***

The YWCA of Taiwan has 10 local associations, 5 stations and centres almost 5,000 members covering the whole country. Our work on CEDAW is responding to the issue of migration in the region. Taiwan has 470,000 immigrant women married to Taiwanese men. Many of the foreign spouses are young women and are from countries such as Vietnam, Indonesia, Thailand, Cambodia and Myanmar. All of

these countries have ratified CEDAW and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

The YWCA's 10 centers run programmes for foreign spouses providing services such as language learning, economic empowerment, prevention of HIV and AIDS, violence against women. The programme seeks to protect their rights and interests using both the national laws, and international law including CEDAW. This is an important aspect on universal application CEDAW and other international treaties.

Together with other six (6) women's organizations, the YWCA of Taiwan has produced an alternative report on "Violence Against Women". The report focused on such issues as migrant labour, human trafficking, women and HIV and domestic violence. My association is in the process of preparing the next alternative report to be presented at an international conference in 2013. The YWCA in Taiwan and other women's organisations believe that it's possible to make CEDAW a real universal treaty, especially in its application.

### **Government Approach to CEDAW**

My country adopted a law making to domesticate CEDAW without reservations, in 2007. The government of Taiwan established monitoring and reporting mechanism using the same approaches as adopted at international level.

The regulation, "The Enforcement Act of the CEDAW", requires all government units, upon exercising its authority, to take into consideration laws regarding protection to gender and human rights specified in the Convention to eliminate gender discrimination and actively promote the realisation of gender equality.

Moreover, the government established a CEDAW reporting system for eliminating all forms of discrimination against women; provide a national report every four years, and invite all relevant experts and representatives of non government organisations to peruse such report. (*Attached is the full Enforcement Act*)

### **Commitment and Solidarity**

Today, I want to learn from you today:

- *What is the status of CEDAW in your countries, and what are doing for universal application?*
- *Are there any of you in a situation like us in Taiwan, committed to CEDAW and working on issue of migrant women?*
- *How do we contribute to encourage all other member States to ratify?*
- *How can we strengthen our alternative reports, and share more experiences?*

For the progress of gender equality in Taiwan, the implement of CEDAW is a great leap. It is not only gears the gender rights of Taiwan to the international standards, but also helps improve the gender equality and eliminate the discrimination.

In conclusion, I was to deliver a humble voice from the women of my country. We seek your solidarity. We hope that one day we can participate in discussions on women and girls rights, just as you do now. Article 8 of CEDAW states that women and men should have the same opportunities to represent their countries internationally and be involved in work of international organizations. Accordingly, we as women seek to have opportunities to share our experiences. We want to learn from you, our sisters on CEDAW experiences around the world.

On our part, we will hold our credo of protecting women's rights and promoting gender equality. I thank you

*Annex: Enforcement Act of the CEDAW*

**Enforcement Act of Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women**

Announced on June 8, 2011

**Article 1** In order to carry out the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (hereinafter referred to as the “Convention”), to remove all forms of discrimination against women, to promote the sturdy development of women, to materialize protection to gender and human rights and to advance gender equality, this Enforcement Act is hereby enacted.

**Article 2** All terms and conditions specified in the Convention regarding protection to human rights of different genders and promotion of sexual equality shall have the same effect as domestic laws.

**Article 3** All rules, regulations, ordinances and administrative measures applicable to the Convention shall refer to the intention of the Convention, and any and all interpretations and explanations provided by the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women of the United Nations.

**Article 4** Upon exercising its authority, all government units shall do so in accordance with all rules and regulations regarding protection to genders and human rights specified in the Convention, eliminate gender discrimination, and actively promote the realization of gender equality.

**Article 5** All government units shall, in accordance with their duties and obligations under current laws and regulations, take the responsibility to plan, promote and enforce matters relevant to the Convention, and carry out assessment. If a matter shall be handled by responsible persons of different government units, all persons involved shall coordinate and communicate for the execution of such matter.

The government shall work with governments of other countries, domestic and international non-government organizations and human right groups in order to achieve the goal of shielding and advancing all protections of genders and human rights specified in the Convention.

**Article 6** The government shall, in accordance to the Convention, establish a reporting system for eliminating all forms of discrimination against women, provide a national report every four years, and invite all relevant experts and representatives of non-government organizations to peruse such report. The government shall, based on the comments and suggestions so provided, review the current circumstances and draw up subsequent resolutions.

**Article 7** Priority shall be given to funding any and all government unit’s implementation of rules regarding protection to genders and human rights specified in the Convention in accordance with the then financial status of the government. All such funding shall be then carried out gradually.

**Article 8** All government units shall review all rules, regulations and administrative measures administered by them in accordance with the Convention. Shall there be anything in conflict with the Convention, the relevant government unit shall complete the enactment of a new rule or regulation, amendment or abolishment of the old rule or regulation, and improvement of the administrative measure within three (3) years after this Enforcement Act comes into effect.

**Article 9** This Enforcement Act shall come into effect from January 1, 2012.