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# **FAMILY DEVELOPMENT AND WELFARE IN NORTH EAST ASIA**

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## **Facing the Challenge of Family Breakdown**

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### **□ Impact of Divorce on Children**

Families in Hong Kong are no exception in facing many challenges like many other developed cities. Growing trend of family breakdown would be the most prominent challenge among all. The divorce rate of Hong Kong has grown drastically in past three decades. In 1986 there were 9.8 divorces per hundred marriages registered in the year; by 2016, that figure had risen to 34.4, which meant for every 3 couples getting married on one hand, another couple divorced on the other hand.

According to a study conducted by the University of Hong Kong in 2014, it was estimated that the proportion of children affected by divorce had risen from 4% in 2001 to 7% in 2011. And the divorced households were found to face higher financial pressure than general households. Further, the study showed that the impacts of divorce on emotional health of affected adults and children, as well as academic motivation of children were generally negative.

In a liberal atmosphere, divorce is regarded as socially acceptable nowadays. Very often, a divorce is simply a mutual and peaceful choice made between two adults. However, if children are involved, the society cannot just look away. If the breakdown of a couple relationship is stressful for the adult, it can be traumatic and bring permanent damage to a growing child. In many cases, children whose parents are getting or have become divorced would suffer from feelings of guilt or abandonment. Worse still, for those cases with high conflicts, triangulation of children in the parental conflicts would be another issue. For instance, it is not uncommon to see a child being asked to take side when

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parents argue. Or else, the child is asked about things private to another parent. All these factors would lead to adverse impact on the child's development. Hence, it is of paramount importance to adopt child-focused perspective in policy formulation and service development to safeguard the well-being of divorced families.

### □ Latest Development in Hong Kong

As recommended by the Law Reform Commission of Hong Kong in 2005<sup>1</sup>, it was suggested to introduce the parental responsibility model into Hong Kong's family law. Underlying this model is the principle that the best interests of children should guide all proceedings concerning children of divorced families. Specifically, it was recommended to introduce a set of new court orders to govern the arrangement of children when their parents divorce. Further, it was recommended to appoint a separate representative for a child in legal proceedings to ensure the children's views could be better expressed.

To implement the recommendations, the Hong Kong Government has prepared the draft Children Proceedings (Parental Responsibility) Bill for public consultation in 2015<sup>2</sup>. Not surprisingly, diverse views from the public were collected in the consultation. Particular concern was placed on whether there would be adequate support measures for divorced families to tie in with the proposed legislative reform. On the other hand, it was commonly raised whether the community is ready for such a paradigm shift in parenting concept given that Hong Kong is a Chinese society with a different culture from that of other western countries. Therefore, the proposed legal reform was suspended.

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<sup>1</sup> The Law Reform Commission of Hong Kong published a series of four reports on the law relating to guardianship and custody of children with recommendations on the appropriate changes to the law. The last one of the series was the Report on Child Custody and Access in which the introduction of "parental responsibility model" was recommended. The full report can be accessed in <https://www.hkreform.gov.hk/en/publications/raccess.htm>

<sup>2</sup> Before the public consultation conducted in 2015, the HKSAR government has conducted a previous public consultation in 2011 ("Child Custody and Access: Whether to Implement the "Joint Parental Responsibility Model" by Legislative Means). Details can be accessed in [https://www.lwb.gov.hk/eng/consult\\_paper/cca.htm](https://www.lwb.gov.hk/eng/consult_paper/cca.htm)

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In spite of the suspension of the proposed legislative reform, the genuine need to strengthen support for divorced families has been echoed by the Government. It was proposed to establish 5 Specialized Co-parenting Support Centres in the financial year of 2018-2019. The 5 new centres operated by non-government organization will provide one-stop support services for divorced parents and their children. This is indeed a breakthrough in the development of family services in Hong Kong in which the special service needs of divorced families are recognized with child-focused approach being adopted.

### □ Way Forward

As reflected in the previous public consultation, parental responsibility is an ideal model deserve pursuing in the long run, when the society is ready for the paradigm shift. To build the readiness, it requires concerted efforts among different sectors of the society. And there are at least four major areas that cross-sector collaboration might involve, which could be denoted by the acronym “CASE”.

Capacity Building – an effective intervention for divorced families requires various specialties such as legal support, mediation, co-parenting counselling, parenting coordination and child psychology. More cross-disciplinary dialogues are needed among social workers, legal practitioners, mediators, psychologists and school personnel for better enhanced professional capacity.

Advocacy – adequate system change is essential to address the challenges facing divorced families at policy level. For instance, in Hong Kong over 40% of divorced cases could not receive maintenance payment on time in 2016. Over 80% of cases chose not to recover the arrears of maintenance under the existing malfunctioning system which requires the “victim” to take up the sole responsibility to recover the delayed alimony. Hence, it is recommended the Government should set up a designated office with statutory authority to

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facilitate the enforcement of maintenance orders.<sup>3</sup>

Service Interfacing – collaborative approach has to be adopted for supporting divorced families with children in order to address a wide range of service needs emerged in different stages. Streamlined services could deliver a seamless experience that makes a great difference for the well-being of service users. Collaboration among service units could be enhanced not only through working out effective protocol, but also genuine communication with a common child-focus mindset.

Education – last but not least, continuous education on the concepts of parental responsibility as well as co-parenting should be conducted in a way to enlighten not only divorced couples but also the general public. Unless the mindset change occurs, it is unrealistic to see the paradigm shift in the society. It is undeniable that legal reform should always follow social and cultural change. Hence, public perception about divorce matters when determining the readiness towards the proposed legal reform.

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<sup>3</sup> Similar practices have been adopted in many overseas countries, such as the Child Support Agency in Australia with the legislative back-up of Child Support (Registration and Collection) Act 1988 and Child Support (Assessment) Act 1989.

## **Issues and Prospects on the Promotion of Foster Care in Japan**

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In this paper, background and current situation of Japanese child protection policy, with emphasis on government endeavors to promoting foster care, as well as future issue, will be discussed.

### **□ Child Protection in Japan**

Currently, it has been said that child protection in Japan is in transitional period. Up till recently, so-called “Social Care of Children in Need of Protection (hereinafter: social care) whose condition do not allow them to live with their own parents due to a variety of reason, have been taken up mainly by residential type social service facilities. Since 2002, however, various reform have been implemented, especially in the field of foster care, and with repeated amendments to systems and laws, Japanese Government clearly shows that priority for social care of children will be placed on foster care.

Generally speaking, there are 2 factors that influence the recent trends on promoting foster care in Japan: International trends and emerging child abuse issues in Japan.

### **□ International Trends**

In 1989, UN General Assembly adopted the Convention of the Rights of the Child. Japanese Government ratified the Convention in 1994, 5 years later.

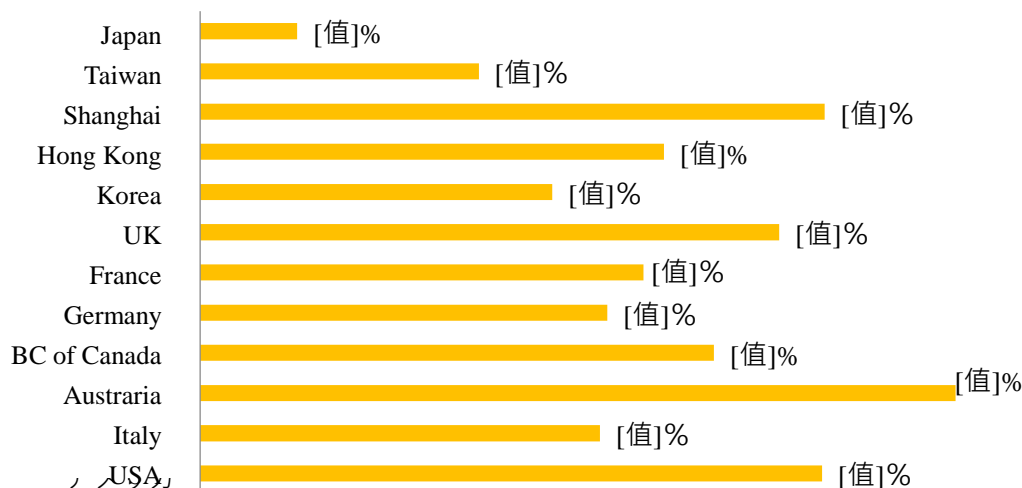
In the Convention, it clearly states that priority should be given to providing family-like setting for children in need of care. The Committee on Child Rights

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pointed out that in Japan, placements to social service facilities are disproportionately larger than to foster families.

Chart 1 shows international comparison of percentage of foster family care. It should be noted that definition of the “family-like setting” in each country differs and the year of the data compiled are not the same. Nevertheless, at least, in around the year 2010, Japanese rate for foster family care is only 12% and it is apparently extremely lower than other countries.

**Chart 1: International Comparison of Percentage of Foster Family Care (around year 2010)**



Source : “Standardized Care Package based on Characteristics of Children in Need of Care” (Kaibara et. al, 2012)

Historically, in Japan, caring children in need of care at social service facilities have been the main stream, with various reasons<sup>4</sup>. However, based on the recommendation from the UN Committee, Japanese Government was compelled to review the situation of social care of the children in need of care.

<sup>4</sup> Notes by JNCSW editor: Some point out that in order to meet the acute need of caring numerous number of children who have lost their family/relatives due to the war created the base for social care at social service facilities. Others may point out the Japanese cultural tradition of tight/closed family tie, not welcoming others who do not have any blood relations in the family. It also should be noted that most of the child care facilities have been making every effort to providing high quality care for the best interest of the children, though may not be perfect if you stand on the “family-like setting” policy.



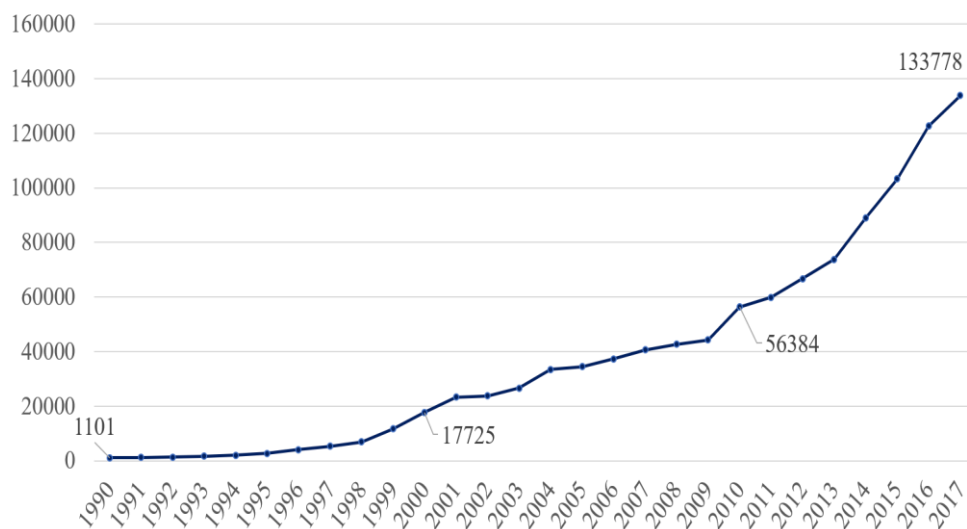
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### ❑ Issues of Child Abuse

Up until 1980s, people in Japan, even among child welfare scholars, believed that there is no child abuse issue in Japan (Ikeda, 1987). However, since 1980s, various incidents betrayed such belief. Influenced by the adoption of the UN Convention in 1989 (Kawasaki, 2006), the data on “Number of Child Abuse Cases Dealt with at Child Guidance Centers” appeared in Japanese formal statistics for the first time.

Chart 2 shows the changes seen in the number of abuse consultation cases dealt with at the child guidance center between 1990 to 2017. It was 1,101 cases in 1990 and sharply increased to 17,225 in 2000, 56,384 in 2010 and to 133,778 in 2017.

**Chart 2: Changes Seen in the “Number of Child Abuse Consultation Dealt with at Child Guidance Centers”**



Source : based on the “Social Welfare Administration Report” , Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare (Miwa, 2018)

We should note that these figures include both cases not so serious as well as cases very severe. Along with the increase seen in the data, from the middle of 1990s, we observe the increase of abuse issues taken up in mass media as a

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serious social issue and such trends enlightened general public's awareness as well.

From the late 1990s, as the attention on child abuse intensified, number of children separated from abusing parents increased rapidly. Social service facilities which have been taking care of such children sometimes have to take up more than designated capacity of their facilities. As it has been said that it is desirable to have smaller scale care environment for such abused children, along with the increasing cases of abuse, foster care become a center of attention.

### □ Current Situation

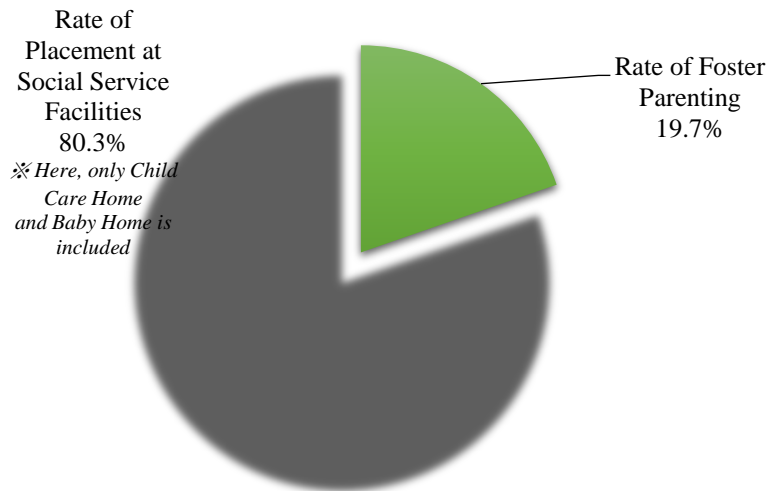
As has been stated, influenced by international trends and increase of abuse cases, Japanese government has been continuously renovating the foster care system since 2002. In 2016, at time of the amendment of Child Welfare Law, statements to specify that the priority to be given to foster care rather than placement to residential care facilities was added in the Law's Basic Ideals section.

However, even with government leadership, increasing rate of foster parenting has been limited.

Chart 3 shows the rate of foster parenting and care at social service facilities. At January 2019 point, foster parenting is only 20 % of the social care of children in need of protection. The increased rate of foster caring stays on to some 1 % a year.

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**Chart 3: Rate of Foster Parenting and Caring at Social Service Facilities**



Source : For the Promotion of Social Rearing , Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare 2019 Jan.

### ❑ Why not Foster Parenting Increase?

One of the reasons being pointed out is the lack of support system for foster parents/families (Miwa, 2018). In Japan decision of where the children are to be cared at are made by a local child guidance center, a government organization whose status and functions have been stated in the Child Welfare Law. At a child guidance center, range of workers' responsibility is quite wide, as a child guidance center deals with most anything related to the well-being of children (and family).

In additions to the issue of abuse, child guidance center deals with consultation on disabilities, on delinquency, on general child rearing children, and any other issue for children/youth and family. Such consultation work lead to home visits, more professional interviewing, monitoring, planning, research, investigation, community outreach, coordination/liaison/networking/collaboration among various related organizations/institutions/facilities, etc. Thus, the staff of child guidance centers are always overloaded with cases and works to be done.

Especially in these days, greater needs to quickly responding to abuse cases burden the workload of the workers at child guidance centers. Since in abuse

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cases, life of children could be in acute danger and thus the priority will be given to dealing with serious abuse cases more than any other consultation.

Thus, many of the child guidance centers are too busy and do not have enough capacity to engage themselves in support activities for foster families. These days, it has become possible for non-government organization promoting foster care to provide training program and making home visits, as well as to respond to consultation for foster families (including “would-be” families). However, agencies that can provide such services can only be found in a limited number of local authorities. Most of the local area do not have such social resources.

Usual child guidance centers are to promote foster parenting, even though support system and structure are not yet well organized in his/her area. Under such condition, some workers may opt to entrust children in need of care to residential social service facilities, rather than to foster families. Because, without proper support and care to foster families, there can be unfavorable incidence may happen to entrusted children. Some worker may entrust children only to foster families which already have good experiences of rearing foster children and/or those who are regarded to have sufficient knowledge and skill to take care of such children, since, such a family may not need additional training/support to function as appropriate foster parents.

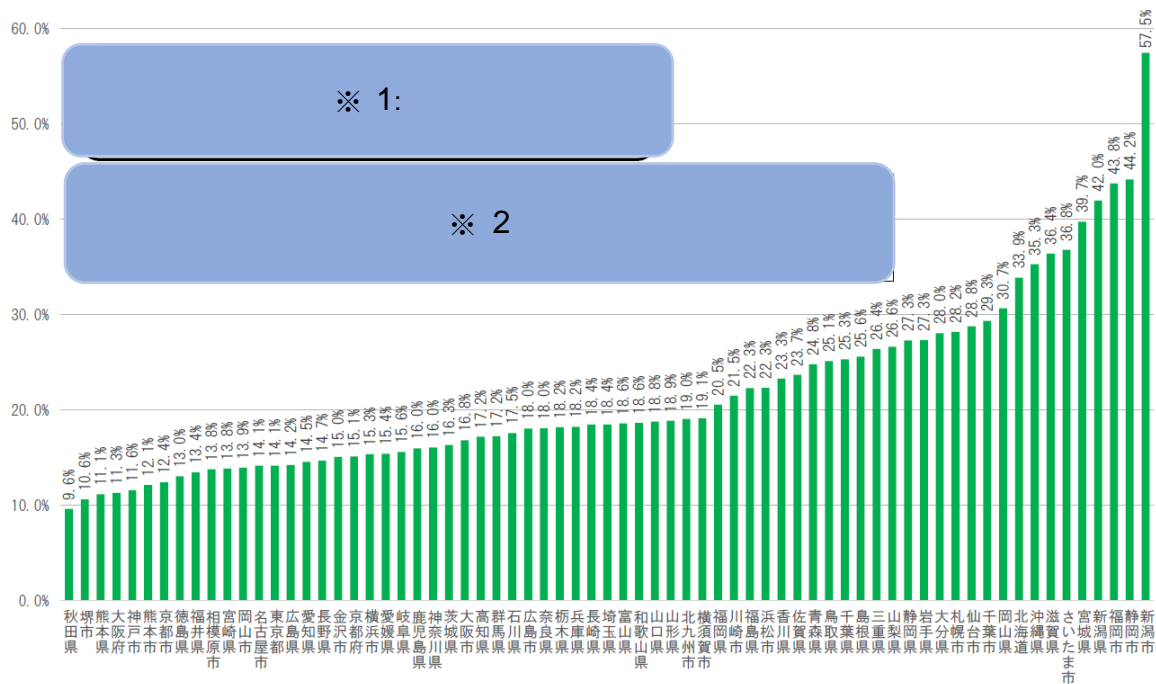
On the other hand, local authorities that have enough staffing at child guidance centers to allocate sufficient number of staff to abuse cases, and/or that have other social service organizations which can take up foster family support on behalf of Child Guidance Centers, may positively work on to increase the number of foster care.

Chart 4 shows the rate of foster parenting by local (prefecture and designated city) government. The local government with highest rate shows 57.5 % of social care being foster parenting while the lowest is 9.6 as of year 2017. It shows that there is a wide gap among the local government how active they are in entrusting children to foster parents. Since the policy of promoting foster

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parenting has not yet been widely recognized in some local governments, and the gap may not necessarily be attributable to the lack of support programs for foster parents, it does show that there are differences among the local authorities.

**Chart 4: Rate of Foster Family Entrustment by Prefecture/Designated Cities**



\* bottom of the chart shows names of local authorities

Source : For the Promotion of Social Rearing, Ministry of Health, Labor and Health, 2019

※1 There are large gap among local authorities:

National Average: 19.7 %  
 Lowest: 9.6 % (Akita prefecture)  
 Largest: 57.5% (Niigata-city)

※2 Formula:

$$\text{Rate of entrustment to foster care(\%)} = \frac{\text{Number of children entrusted to foster family/ family homes}}{\text{Number of children placed in Baby Homes, Child Homes, and to foster care/foster home}}$$

Source: Social Welfare Administration Report 2017

### □ Future Issue

Based on the analysis above, it can be said that there are acute needs to alleviating the differences of practices among local governments, as well as to improving the system and structure to supporting foster parents. In order to provide appropriate care to children in need of protection with a certain level of care quality, it will be vitally important to ensure standardized training and support for foster families.

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**Change of Korean Family and Directions for Family Policy: Emphasis on Family Value and Spread of Sense of Community**

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**Sang Myung University**

Changes in the environment surrounding families in Korea now put considerable pressure on them. Systematic and continuous learning of knowledge is required for family members over their life cycle, and ever-growing complexity due to various structural changes leads to increasing family issues, making families more likely to face crisis and dissolution. In spite of this, however, the family is still important as it maintains reproduction and socialization functions as a basic unit of social composition and is a source of happiness based on intimacy. Particularly in Korea, even if the country provides welfare benefits for the people it is required to, there are significant expectations on the family.

The family is drawing attention in terms of Korean policy for welfare state. Families contribute to building a social safety net in dangerous society and can become social capital by reducing social costs. This makes the government take a positive approach to pursue growth by finding out the potential of the family and strengthening its functions and capabilities instead of a passive approach of providing support for families to solve their problems.

In Korea, family policies should be based on these characteristics unique to the Korean family. Given the current changes and context of families in Korea, system vs. autonomy, hierarchy vs. equality, communalism vs. individualism, closedness vs. openness, uniformity vs. diversity, instrumentality vs. intimacy can be seen as issues to tackle. These issues are primarily related to changes within family, but seem to be more closely related to the various systems and

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environmental conditions surrounding the family. Current changes in the Korean family now showcase one of the two opposite aspects clearly, but in general, there is a tendency that both are mixed.

Some argued that in the modernization process of Korea, the family was at the core in the process of Korea's modernization, and as the country went through a 'compact modernization', families suffered extreme fatigue. This awareness remains valid today after the eras of modernization, democratization, globalization and informatization, based on Korea's modern national policy 'economic development before welfare'. Under this policy, the state encouraged or allowed family-centeredism by entrusting the survival and protection of individuals to family and implementing policies based on families not on individuals. Family selfishness or antisocial family can be seen to occur in this context. Therefore, in order to reduce harmful effects of family selfishness, it is necessary to extend family-based communication and solidarity and provide democratic education to help families raise their members as a social individual who respects rights and obligations.

Amid active discussions about the nature of family in contemporary Korean society, there are studies that suggest the possibility and advantages of a communal family model for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In Korea, families are still more centered on community and family than individuals. From this perspective, while the familism of Korea's modern nuclear family put shared interests of the family first, in the 21st-century community family model, equal individuals gather together and become a family, but communal aspects are more stressed than individualistic aspects of the family members. Like this, Korean family tends to be equal in terms of material and emotional relationships thanks to individualistic trends, but the focus is still on family than individuals. As Koreans have a strong sense of community, family work together to solve financial tasks on an equal basis as families in the West do, while Korean families tend to be united to solve emotional tasks, unlike Western ones.



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What familism means is changing in Korean society as other values that used to be sacrificed or regarded as secondary for the survival and stability of family have become important. The existing 'primary, basic material-centered familism' is transforming into a 'secondary, non-material and horizontal network value-based familism'. In Korean familism, more reflective values are reinforced because of the changes in external circumstances, that is, the government's intervention in minimal family welfare and substantial establishment of statutory and institutional instruments to advocate the expansion of rights and freedom of individuals.

The overarching value for future family policy-making is sense of community consciousness and citizenship of democratic society. It is necessary to shift the material and instrumental values that were given excessively to Korean family over the course of the country's modernization to spiritual and emotional values. In addition, It is desirable to move towards an alternative direction of 'open familism' that a majority of the people aspires for as a future family scenario, which reflects an 'intimate but loose' family structure and relationship, while emphasizing intimacy, communication and family ties as well as respecting individual values and rights.

### **□ Concrete Strategies for This Direction Can be Divided into Academic and Practical Aspects**

In academic terms, the first is to lay a theoretical foundation by providing support for family research (intervention techniques such as family philosophy, education, counseling), and the second is to foster professionals by supporting family-related disciplines and make family-related subjects as core courses in liberal arts in collaboration between relevant government departments and universities.

In practical terms, the strategies for this purpose include, firstly, making family promotion such as improvement or enhancement of family relationship the government's key policy; secondly, expanding and activating family education

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programs offered by the Center for Healthy Family Support; thirdly, linking to lifelong learning and community programs; fourthly, providing liberal arts lectures and courses for citizens to cultivate the soul of humanities; fifthly, nurturing a sense of community and citizenship of democratic society in collaboration with civic society's programs; sixthly, reshuffling family professional qualification programs; seventhly, establishing a system to certify family-friendly firms practicing family education; eighthly, taking the lead in family promotion campaign and raising awareness for 'happiness through family' and 'happy society with happy individuals and families' in cooperation with civic groups and mass media; and ninth, putting in place policies that require regular checkups for family functions like health checkups and family life education or family counseling as necessary.

Although suggestions above all remain at an exploratory and experimental level and there are many obstacles to their realizations, the full-swing implementation of family policy will pave the way for Korea to become an advanced welfare state.

## **Mongolian Government Policy for Family and Child Protection**

**Dr Myadagmaa.Ch**

**Mongolian United Association of Social Welfare Organizations**

Mongolia's total population reached 3.1 million in 2016, and among them, 35.8% is child of 18 or less, and 34% is young generation from 19 to 34, which proves that it is relatively a young country in the world.

Family, which is the major environment where child grows, lays important role in child human right protection and child abuse. According to the data of National Statistics Service, as of 2016, total number of families in Mongolia is 869,849, and you can say that there are 3.5 people in one family.

Mongolia became 5<sup>th</sup> country in the world agreeing to UN Child Human Rights Treaty in 1990, and afterwards, legal environment for child protection began to be established. In 1996, "Child Human Rights Protection Act" is enacted, and in 2016, it is revised as "Child Human Rights Act". In addition, in 2016, "Child Protection Act" is enacted. Afterwards, among many actions for child human rights and child protection was "Healthy Mongolian Family Forming", and there are many cases that family does not perform its function due to economic deterioration and social changes. Child should grow in healthy family environment, but when family does not function well and there is a problem in the family, eventually, child receives the biggest damage. There can be many explanations about Mongolian family problems, but today, we would like to look more deeply into child breakup and child abuse within the family due to divorce.

First is the increased divorce rate.

Recently, in Mongolia, family break-up increases due to divorce, and as of 2016, divorce rate is bigger than the rate of marriage. In 2016, number of

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marriage reports was 17,600 couples, but on the other hand, 3,900 couples divorced. Marriage reports increased by 1.5% from the previous year, but the divorce rate rapidly increased to be 3.3%, which is higher than marriage. There are many reasons for family breakup, but it is mainly due to low income of family, violence and alcohol dependency of the husband, and in addition, many reasons such as fathers who work at overseas as “workers” not returning home for a long time cause family breakup.

Currently, in Mongolia, 1 out of 3 families have low income, and 1 out of 3 families suffer family violence. Also, there is a survey result that, in 1 out of 10 families, woman is practical head of the family. New problems occur in family when the head of the family, husband, leaves to overseas as worker causing change in the composition of the family. Husband in family quits job and goes to overseas to work, and when he returns, there are many cases he lost his health or became sick with occupational disease. Also, husband going to mining region far away for short or long period and different role sharing in the family also cause problem another problem in the family. Problem between the husband and wife in such family has the biggest influence on the children. When husband and wife get divorce, they do not have to play the role of husband and wife any more, but the role as parents stays the same, but they cannot do it well, so children receives the biggest damage.

Second is the point that 84.7% of child abuse occurs inside the family.

In 2016, according to “Child Human Rights and Protection” survey carried out by Good Neighbors Mongolian Branch with 4,263 children of the ages from 11 to 18 and 2,743 parents in 8 states out of 21 states of Mongolia and 7 districts of Ulaanbaatar, among 4,264 children survey targets, 82.2% children answered that they experienced child abuse. Answers were, 8 out of 10 children had child abuse experiences, and among children with child abuse experiences, 1 out of 2 had physical abuse, 1 out of 4 experienced neglect ion and abandonment, 3 out of 5 had mental abuse, and 1 out of 8 had sexual abuse including sexual harassment and sexual violence. But, more serious problem is that, among

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those who answered having child abuse, 84.7% answered that the abuse was inside home. So many child abuses in home, which should be the safest environment for child, shows that problems in the family lead to child abuse. 70% of the reasons for child abuse in home are from family conflict, and 39% occurs due to parents not knowing the minds of the children. Also, main reason of 38% of the child abuse is from the stress by low income.

As such, to solve the problem of family and child, in 2016, established The Implementing agency of Government Mongolia “Authority for Family, Child and Youth Development”, which is in charge of family, children and youth problems, for the first time to support “to establish value of Mongolian family to reduce family breakups, value child human rights and to increase learning, development and employment of youth”. As Family Child Development Office is established, from Aug. 2017, Child Center was changed to “Child Protection Specialized Facility” based on expertise on violence damaged children, and started to run as government organization. For child abuse prevention and protection, regional based community service center staffs, social welfare staffs and psychological therapists “integrated group” was formed, and they are working to prevent child abuse and reduce child abuse within the regions. In addition, from Jan. 2017, child emergency call 108 is expanded as call center to run for 24 hours a day. Reports to child emergency call 108 are relationships with peers, family relationship, consulting for health, teenager pregnancy, how to discipline children, foster parents problems, internet exposure, drugs, child human rights, involvement, development, sexual life, adolescence problem, psychological consulting and career consulting, and among them, 16.3% are child abuse related information request calls, 9.2% are psychological consultation request calls, and 2.1% are reports for children requiring protection.

As such, to solve many problems for children, government set total budget for Family Children Development Office for 2017 as 5 billion Tugrik, which is more than 2 times from previous year, and in 2018, for the first time in history, only for “child protection and providing services related to child protection”, national

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budget was set to be 5 billion Tugrik. Greatly increasing budget for child protection shows increased attention of the government for child abuse protection and damaged children which did not receive support before. I wish that this budget will be used for child abuse prevention inside family rather than focusing on afterwards after the occurrences. I wish that it will be more efficiently utilized in government organizations and private organizations for practical prevention of danger for children, education for awareness on child abuse and for education and children protection to help understanding parents and fosters about law.

## **The Changing Profile of the Taiwanese Family and the Governmental Policies**

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### **□ Changing Family Structure**

In our risk society, traditional Taiwanese families face many challenges: more women have entered the labour market; men's jobs have become less secure; the average fertility rate has been declining; delayed marriage and the decision not to marry have become increasingly popular; and divorce is now acceptable and widely practiced. All these changes, which are the result of the new global economy, threaten Taiwan's patriarchal family structure and traditional intergenerational contract.

The dominant influence in Taiwanese society is Confucianism. Through its guiding principles of social relations and behaviour, Confucianism emphasizes the importance of status distinction (class, gender and age), obedience, familism, collectivism and mutual benefit. The central tenet of familism is the concept of filial piety, which holds that children must respect their parents' authority and that parents and children are mutually dependent. In Taiwan, the family is the main welfare provider. Compared with the governments of many European countries, Taiwan's government plays a very minor role in the provision of welfare. Goodman et al. (1998) maintains that neo-Confucianism is the primary reason for East-Asian economic success: it fosters strong family relations, benevolent paternalism, social harmony, discipline and a strong work ethic. The government focuses on economic development, and welfare resources are spent on schemes that benefit the economy. Thus, Taiwan, like Korea, Singapore and Hong Kong, is regarded as a productivist welfare state. Taiwanese families have been vulnerable to the risk factors in recent years.

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First, an increasing number of women have entered the labour market and are, therefore, unable to be full-time family caregivers. Until the 1960s, Taiwan was an agrarian society, and women were responsible for caring for children and the elderly at home. The female participation rate in the labour market grew from 33% in 1966 to 51.1% in 2018, and 87% of the participants in 2018 were wage-earning workers. Nowadays, an increasing number of women with children aged 6–17 and women with children under 3 years opt to remain in the labour market.

Second, changing demographics have threatened the traditional means of caring for the elderly. In Taiwan, the number of seniors is increasing, whereas the average fertility rate has declined dramatically. Women between the age of 15 and 44 had only 1.13 children on average in 2017, the lowest birth rate in the world. It is likely that people will not be able to rely on their offspring to take care of them when they are old.

Third, marriage is no longer virtually inevitable. Delayed marriages and the decision not to marry, especially on the part of women, have become a trend. Meanwhile, divorce has become more acceptable. In the 1970s, the average age at marriage for a man was 28, and for a woman 22. By 2017, these ages had risen to 32.4 and 30.0, respectively. The crude marriage rate (the ratio of newly married couples to the total population) has dropped from 9.7% in 1980 to 5.84% in 2017, whereas the crude divorce rate (the ratio of newly divorced couples to the total population) has increased from 0.4% in the 1970s to 2.31% in 2017. Single-person households and single-parent families are on the rise, whereas the percentage of nuclear families has decreased steadily, from 54% in 1994 to 35.7% in 2017. More than one-third (37.8%) of women aged 20 to 24 were married in 1982. This number dropped to 4.6% in 2012. In 1982, marriage was the common state of women over thirty: 88.7% of women aged 30 to 34 were married. Now only about half of the women in this age group are married.



## Family Development and Welfare in North East Asia

### □ Governmental Policies

Taiwanese policies affecting women workers reflect the changes in the country's ideology. Before 1999, the government did not encourage married women to stay at home to take care of children, nor did it urge them to join the workforce. Some government publications seem to suggest that married women should take care of children and work at the same time, given the opportunities afforded by family factories and the creation of handcrafts at home. Still, for the most part, the government did not interfere with the family structure or depend on the employment of married women.

Since 2000, more policies have been introduced to support independent businesswomen and allow disadvantaged women to enter the workforce. For the first time women became the main target of labour policies. New schemes included business start-up classes, access to business consultants, and start-up loans offered by the Wild Geese project and the Phoenix Micro-business, among others. Some projects were designed to give women new skills, such as the digital training courses offered in rural areas to help women create websites to sell their goods. The introduction of the Gender Equality in Employment Act, protecting women workers from gender discrimination, was also an important milestone.

Beginning in 2008, policies were created to address Taiwan's low fertility rate. Cash child benefits were given to families with young children. More tax deductions for the family with young children, such as childminders fees. In recent years, governmental policies tend to encourage parents to leave their workplace temporarily upon the birth of a child. The government offers parents benefits if they stay at home as full-time mothers/fathers. In 2018, a quasi-public nursery project was issued to build up or subsidize nursery in order to cost down the burden of the family with young children. Child benefits were extended from two years old children to four.

## Family Development and Welfare in North East Asia

In the case of Taiwan, in conclusion, the government has accepted the model of the two-earner family and created policies to support it since 2000. Women are encouraged to be both workers and mothers. Still, the policies cannot control the tendency of low fertility rate and elderly care, neither to solve the problems of family deconstruction.

**Table 1: Government policies designed for women in Taiwan**

Period	Labour policies	Welfare policies
Before 1999	Women's Vocational Training Programs	1996 Living Allowance for Special Targets (female breadwinners) 1992 Foreign Attendants, Foreign Maids Policy in the Employment Service Act
2000-2008	2000 Allowances for Women in Special Living Conditions (start-up loans) 2002 Wild Geese Project 2002 Gender Equality in Employment Act 2007 Phoenix Micro-business Start-up Loan and Consulting Plan 2007 Digital Training Courses for Women Employment assistance programs for foreign spouses and Mainland spouses	2000 Measure of Support for Women in Special Living Conditions 2005 Employment Promotion Plan for Special Targets (women in special conditions)
2008-2016	2010 Women's Employment Promotion Plans	2008 Nanny subsidy(means-tested) 2009 Parental leave subsidy 2012 Child benefit (means-tested) 2013 Tax deduction for young children (means-tested)
2016-now		2018 Qusi-public nursery project.

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