

Initiative for Single Women



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Organisation: Seoul Metropolitan Government (SMG)

Country: Korea

Level of government: Local government

Sector: General public services, Health, Housing and community amenities, Social protection

Type: Public Service

Launched in: 2012

Overall development time: 1 year 6 months

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Description

With more citizens opting to live by themselves, and 53% of them being women, it became necessary to introduce a measure aimed at supporting the lives of single women. Against this backdrop, our Initiative for Single Women includes many services for these women: safe housing; an education programme; healthcare services; and job opportunities.

Thanks to this new initiative, 2 000 single female households have been able to move into a safer housing environment. In addition, 100 000 women have been expected to benefit from the violence prevention programme by 2015, and 700 women have already benefited from the healthcare services. Measures taken by the Seoul Metropolitan Government (SMG) are as follows:

- Housing: supplying 2 000 units of rental studio apartments by 2015 that are exclusively for single women.
- Safety: implementing Unmanned Delivery Systems and installing anti-theft windows.
- Health: providing medical services onsite and setting up a women's clinic at Boramae Hospital, a municipal hospital, for convenient obstetrics and gynecology medical services.
- Jobs: offering internships for single women, creating decent job opportunities.
- Community: supporting 100 communities, like the Seoul Med Co-op, for single women by 2015.
- Grievances Settlement: providing 'One-Stop Real Estate Services' to women who have difficulty with their housing contracts.

Why the innovation was developed

The number of single women in Seoul has grown rapidly in the last two decades from 9.1% to 24.4%. Unfortunately, however, a large number of them still experience difficulties in certain areas: employment, housing, healthcare, and so on.

- For instance, a survey indicated that 43.7% of the single women remained unemployed, which is three times higher than that of multi-people households.
- Even working women reported that they were nervous about their job security, as the majority of them engaged in part-time or temporary jobs.
- According to 2012 survey on single female households, 8 out of 10 women answered that they felt anxious about housing conditions. In particular, 81.7% of them lived at a monthly rental (49.5%) or 'Chonse (32.2%)', a unique term used in Korea, where renters make a lump-sum deposit on a rental space. Also, most of the living areas were dosshouses, digs and 'gosiwon', residential areas packed with small-sized studios.
- Lastly, with regards to healthcare, there was not enough medical services provided to women.
- Moreover, single women were particularly exposed to mental and physical diseases due to inadequate nutritional intake and social isolation.

Objectives

Improve effectiveness, Improve service quality, Improve social equity, Improve user satisfaction

- Improving gender equality in all policies.
- Improving women's working environments as well as female health.
- Enhancing crime prevention through environmental designs and supplying housing that is exclusively for women.

Main beneficiaries

General population, Other

Single women.

- In the past, a high percentage (44%) of single women used to be temporary workers, and they mainly worked in the service sector. With the new initiative, they were given internship opportunities at sound companies, and more than 200 jobs were created.
- About 80% of the single female households complained of unstable living conditions, mainly due to the increase in the housing cost. However, the initiative has expanded the supply of public rental housing for single female households and provided safer rental housing for them as well.

Existing similar practices

Women-Friendly City Project

In my own organisation

Women & Family Policy Affairs Office

The SGM implemented the "Women Friendly City" Project, with its policy aimed at happiness of women, an extended concept from its previous goal of gender equality.

Results

Effectiveness

- Women, who previously had difficulty accessing medical care due to their working hours, were able to take advantage of the visiting healthcare service. So far, 700 women have used and benefited from this service.
 - It also made safe housing more available to women of single households. 2 000 women have moved into safer housing environments.
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Service quality

Other:

- The initiative created an educational programme that teaches theoretical and practical information to prevent violence against women. It is estimated that 100 000 women will benefit from this programme by 2015.

Development

Design

It was the Mayor of Seoul, Won Soon Park, who first proposed the 'Initiative for Single Women'. Mr. Park raised issues on wrong prediction and responses made by central and local governments on the demographic changes and proposed policy making that would be systematically analysed and customised for 'women of single households' that has shown a rapid increase and has become a major type of household in recent years. For this, the Seoul Mayor hosted an online policy forum on June 1st, 2012 on the topic of 'Happy Seoul for Single Female Household! What do we need?' and met Seoul citizens to discuss and listen to their various opinions. These were then taken into account on a future policy-making process. He also commissioned the Seoul Foundation of Women and Family to examine the reality of the single female households of Seoul in order to develop a working-level policy alternative.

Design time: 3 months

Testing

- First, Seoul conducted a survey on 570 single women to understand their living conditions and their needs.
- It also opened an e-policy forum to hear opinions of the citizens, and formed a task force to establish comprehensive measures for single women living in Seoul.

Testing time: 1 month

Implementation

Tools used:

- Formed a task force team to support women of the single household to implement a policy organically connected therewith. Composed of experts from various departments for policy making and implementing, in order to provide a comprehensive well-being support plan in diverse sectors including housing, public health, and labor.
- Conducted a survey targeting 570 single female households in Seoul to understand their living conditions and policy needs.
- Met with single, female public officers of the SMG to listen to their difficulties and share information and tried to draw more attention and create shared sympathy on this issue.
- Opened an e-policy forum to hear policy proposal and embody the goal of the policy.
- Formed a 'Task Force Team to establish Comprehensive Support Initiative for Women of Single Household' led by single women public officers and prioritised policy strategies.

Resources used:

- Staff: 'Gender Equality Committee,' an expert group, and other civil groups contributed in establishing, implementing and monitoring the initiative.
- A collaboration network with various private agencies was formed to make full use of resources in the private sector. For instance, The SMG ran programs in partnership with private organisations like 'Violence-Free Academy for Women' and 'Korea Taekwondo Association' that have expertise in their fields
- The SMG signed an MOU with Seoul Metropolitan Police Agency to prevent violence against single women.
- Also, it built a network with local community centers and Seoul Metro in order to launch the project called, 'Unmanned Delivery System'.
- There were little fiscal burdens for the SMG, because they were already reflected in the municipal budget. Quite a number of projects like the designation of hospitals that are exclusively for women did not incur additional costs. Moreover, by transforming old government buildings into rental houses, it was possible to provide single women with houses.

Implementation time: 2 months

Diffusion

- Seoul held press conference with major news media such as KBS, MBC, Chosun-ilbo, and so on.
- The SMG is currently seeking to promote and distribute the initiative internationally. Specifically, it attempts to host international conferences and invite distinguished scholars around the world.

Diffusion time: 1 month

Challenges and solutions

- There were some difficulties in designing and implementing the initiative since it was the first attempt to improve the lives of single female households.- Solution: Seoul conducted thorough research on the current situation and hosted forums to collect public opinion.
 - Difficulties in reaching social consensus:- Solution: The SMG made an effort to draw public attention and persuade them to understand the importance of providing a safe environment for single women.
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Partnerships

Korean Women's Policy Network, Unnie Network and Happy Seoul for Single Women

Civil Society

With the help of these organisations, the SMG was able to get a better understanding of services and programmes needed for the single women.

Other divisions in the Seoul Metropolitan Government

Other Public Sector

Collaboration among many divisions in the SGM to ensure that the services would be properly provided and monitored.

Lessons Learned

Lessons Learned

- Educational programmes regarding the prevention of violence against women are very beneficial to the relevant women.
 - The combination of creating safer housing environments for women and educating prevention of violence against women is effective in making women feel safer.
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Conditions for success

- Seoul tried to incorporate diverse opinions from private and public sectors, and as part of an effort, it held public hearings and press conferences.
 - The newly implemented policy has been closely monitored by related divisions within the SMG and the Gender Equality Committee.
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Other information

The Initiative for Single Women won the 2013 United Nations Public Service Award.

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