

# Self-Empowerment Programme for Runaway Teenage Girls

**Published On:** 07 November 2014

**Organisation:** Women & Family Policy Affairs Office, Seoul Metropolitan Government

**Country:** Korea

**Level of government:** Local government

**Sector:** Social protection

**Type:** Public Service

**Launched in:** 2001

**Overall development time:** 3 years 2 months

**Link to the innovation's website**

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# Description

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This programme aims to strengthen the capability of runaway teenage girls to gain independence through a support system. It provides diverse support to Self-Empowerment Schools and Self-Empowerment Training Shops run by private organisations in order to facilitate capacity building of teenage girls - especially those who ran away from home and experienced sexual trafficking - and to satisfy their psychosocial needs. Specific measures include establishing the self-Empowerment School (in 2009), providing job training (in 2010) and launching a restaurant-cum-café (in 2010) to give financial aid to teenage women. With these measures, the Seoul Metropolitan Government (SMG) was able to help them achieve independence and escape from the trap of prostitution and sex-trafficking.

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## Why the innovation was developed

- After the 1997-98 Asian financial Crises, many families suffered from disintegration due to steep wage cuts, job losses and other economic hardship. As a result, a significant number of teenagers dropped out of school and forced out on the street. It was reported that in 2009, there were an estimated 110 000 runaway teenage women, 50% of whom were exposed to prostitution. The problem of teenage runaway and teenage prostitution could not be solved by simply bringing them back to their families. Even when they were caught by the police and sent back home, they ran away again most of the time, because their families' unstable economic condition remained unchanged. Considering the fact that Korea's high-school admission rate reached 99% and college admission rate 82%, it was obvious that the runaway girls who graduated from neither high school nor college would have little opportunity in leading a decent life. According to the 2008 focus group interview, 70% of runaway teenage girls and teen prostitutes wanted to be 'empowered' to live an independent life. But since most of them lacked proper education and job skills, they ended up engaging in relatively low-paid jobs.
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## Objectives

Improve access, Improve effectiveness, Improve social equity

- To prevent runaway teenage girls from resorting to prostitution.
  - To promote economic independence of runaway female teenagers.
  - To promote social integration by embracing the minority group of runaway teenage girls.
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## Main beneficiaries

Civil Society, High-risk populations, Low-income groups, Young people

- Runaway teenage girls: the programme will help runaway teenage girls, especially those who had been sexually abused, stand on their own feet again.
- Seoul Citizens: The efforts to embrace runaway teenage girls will contribute to tackling the issue of rising teenage crime and ease its negative impact on the whole society.

# Results

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## Effectiveness

- The Self-Empowerment Programme was effective in that it provided practical education to the runaway teenagers which was helpful for them to find jobs.
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## Service quality

### Accessibility:

- The programme provided the runaway teenagers with easy access to an education, internship opportunities and jobs.
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## Other improvements

When comparing the result of pre- and post-assessment of 'gender sensitivity,' there was a slight improvement. The average score of post-assessment was 3.27 on a four-point scale, a 0.1 point increase from the pre-assessment result. It means that teenage women became more aware of the importance of protecting women's rights. Moreover, the assessment of 'independence level' showed that teenage girls became more independent as they received support from Self-Empowerment School and other related programmes.

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## Evaluation

- Assessment Methods: Literature review.
- Monitoring and observation of the operation of the model:
- Interviews with teenage women.
- Interview of staff focus group.
- Performance analysis of the status of independence of teenage women who had participated in the model: statistics analysis and network analysis.

# Development

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## Design

The Self-Empowerment Programme is based on an idea proposed by the Teenage Women Policy Monitoring Team (composed of Ewha Women's University, Korea Women's Institute, and the Catholic University of Korea), which has participated in monitoring the process since 2007. The Seoul Metropolitan Government (SMG) developed this idea into a concrete policy, which was then executed with strong support from the city. Together with the Monitoring Team, the SMG developed a programme tailored to the needs and reality of teenage girls. Seoul's first female vice-mayor, Eunhee Cho, also gave strong support in implementing the Self-Empowerment Programme.

Design time: 2 years

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## Testing

- A survey was conducted on runaway girls/teenage prostitutes regarding what kind of support they needed the most.
- While enrolled in the programme and after having graduated from the programme, they were surveyed on how useful they thought the programme was.

Testing time: 2 months

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## Implementation

### Tools used:

- Developed a gender-responsive Self-Empowerment Program approach by holding regular meetings with gender studies experts in NGOs, governments, and academia.
- Organised a task force team in 2009 consisting of relevant experts, professors, and shelter supervisors to seek advice on how to run the Self-Empowerment School.
- Selected a private institution with vast experience in working with teenage girls to run the school to ensure success.

### Resources used:

- Budget: Seoul provided most of the expenses for establishing the Self-Empowerment School when it first opened in 2009. After the school had proved the necessity of its existence, the central government agreed to provide a 50/50 cost share via matching funds programme which would stabilise the financial condition of the school.
- Technical Support: The school provided an information exchange through the homepage and made use of company job mentors. It regularly updated its homepage and operated a system where female students could make inquiries and get responses.
- Human resources: Judges, government officials, teachers, and probation officers regularly held a meeting to ensure that the teenage girls completed their regular education. Seoul also recruited college student volunteers to provide mentoring programmes to the teenage girls and encourage the girls to enjoy learning.

Implementation time: 1 year

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## Challenges and solutions

- Negative attitude of local residents towards runaway teenage girls.
    - Solution 1: Officials from the SMGSI were able to meet local residents with the help of the district governments, and they tried to convince the residents of the need to build the Self-Empowerment School.
    - Solution 2: As part of an effort to improve the image of runaway teenage girls, Seoul released articles on local newspapers and opened the school campus to the locals for their use.
  - Limited job/internship opportunities. Solution: Students were given a chance to work at day care centres and welfare centres run by the SMG. When some of the successful cases were advertised to the public, a number of companies offered to provide them with internship opportunities.
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## Partnerships

### Judicial Institutions

Other Public Sector

Seoul held regular consultations with judicial institutions such as the court, the National Police Agency and probation offices.

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## Diverse

### Other

The SMG built a network composed of NGOs, district governments and academia representatives, and hosted monthly conferences.

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## Diverse

### Other

Heads of women's shelters, scholars, government officials and school teachers participated in the conferences to identify best approaches.

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## College student volunteers

### Civil Society

College student volunteers were recruited. They ran mentoring programmes for the teenage girls and encouraged them to complete their education.

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# Lessons Learned

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## Lessons Learned

- It is important for society to offer once troubled teenage girls a route back into the community as healthy members. These efforts will contribute to tackle the issue of rising teenage crime and ease its negative impact on the whole of society.
  - The society needs more alternative schools and shelters to take care of such youngsters in trouble and help them stand on their own feet again.
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## Conditions for success

- Financial resources: Seoul was able to secure stable financial resources due to the Central Government's provision of 50-50 matching funds.
  - Seoul established the legal basis for this programme by introducing following rules: 'Counselling of teenage women, prevention of prostitution, safety and health support projects' (paragraph 14) and 'Prevention of prostitution, victim protection, counselling and rehabilitation support' (paragraph 12).
  - A recommendation issued by the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).
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## Other information

- Second winner of the United Nations Public Service Award in 2011.
- Other local governments including Cheju, Changwon, and Busan have visited Seoul to seek advice regarding the Self-Empowerment Programme.

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