



Seoul

Title of the Initiative	Citizen Participation-oriented Youth Prostitution Prevention Project through Regional Networks
Initiative Duration	2009-2019
Submitted by	Ms. Yang, Seung-Cho, Public Servant
Comments by the Jury	<p>Seoul has developed a great capacity for innovation in urban planning and management and has recently implemented a very transparent procurement system. But it is in the social field, aimed particularly at helping young people experiencing severe problems, that two highly original initiatives merit being highlighted and widely disseminated. The first is a Youth Prostitution Prevention Project, and the second tackles the growing problem – of great significance in Korea and many other countries—that of internet addiction.</p> <p>The issue of teenage prostitution has grown steadily over the last 15 years, and around 200,000 young people run away from home each year. Many young girl runaways are at grave risk of falling into prostitution, even if they do not define themselves as such. When they are found, sending them back to homes that are often dysfunctional and prone to domestic violence or to temporary shelters have proven to be ineffective. Therefore, a new philosophy of social intervention has led to the establishment of the ‘Self-Empowerment School for teen prostitutes’, run by a multi-disciplinary team. The first school opened in 2009 followed swiftly by a second. Their success has led to co-funding by central government.</p> <p>A restaurant/café was opened to provide job training</p>

and experience for the girls. A crucial element in the success of the schools is its focus on self-empowerment – the engagement of the girls themselves in building a brighter future. The initiative also uses the web in a proactive way, and finding practical vocational/job training and placement is central. The school initially met with opposition from local residents, and the city has worked hard to change these perceptions and win support. The second issue – internet addiction – is important given that over 12% of Korean citizens between the ages of 9 and 39 are estimated to have some symptoms of internet addiction. It affects young people in particular. The city government has set up since 2009 “I Will Centres” – and five such centres will have been further established by the end of 2012. The aim is to help young people commit to changing their lives, using a wide range of counseling and therapy techniques and also through preventative work in schools and with parents. The centres have already led to significant international interest.

Seoul has a population of 10,528,774 people and covers a land area of 605.41 sq km.

Citizen Participation-oriented Youth Prostitution Prevention Project through Regional Networks

Background Information

- ◉ Jump in teenage prostitution in aftermath of global economic crisis

South Korea has experienced the repercussions of the Asian financial crisis and global economic stagnation over the past decade. Unstable socio-economic conditions have weakened the family’s caring function, and many neglected teenagers have dropped out of school and gone on to the streets. It is estimated

that every year there are around 200,000 runaways, most of whom are actually trying to escape from a difficult home environment. One out of every four of these youngsters ends up in the sex industry.

In a country where the internet penetration rate is very high, online-chatting serves as a catalyst to the growth of private prostitution. However, most of these girls are unaware that they are ‘selling sex’. They view what they do as a part-time job for food and shelter for the day, distinguishing it in their minds from prostitution in brothels. Neither is the rest of South Korean society aware that such a practice is often the first step to various forms of adult prostitution.

- Lack of social safety net for runaway teenage girls

The problem of teenage runaways and teenage prostitution can’t be resolved simply by bringing them back to their families. Even when they are caught by the police and returned to their homes, they run away again because of the unstable family conditions. Then a vicious cycle starts over again as they once again resort to prostitution to get them through the day. Considering Korea’s high school admission rate of 99% and college admission rate of 82%, these runaway girls stand little chance of starting a new life. Until recently, the only welfare service available to these girls provided by the Seoul Metropolitan Government was temporary shelters, which did little to resolve these problems. Even services offering “protection” and “guidance” do not fulfill teenage girls’ desires and are shunned by them. The girls return to their street life. A new strategy and approach are now needed to prevent teenagers who are exposed to prostitution from becoming adult prostitutes.

Goals of the Initiative

A survey of runaway teenage girls and teen prostitutes (focus group interview, 2008) found that 70% of them wanted to be ‘empowered’ to live an independent life. But most of them lack education and job skills and end up in low-paying jobs (gas station, fast food restaurants.) before going back to prostitution. In response, the Seoul Metropolitan Government launched the Youth prostitution Prevention Project to provide practical means of empowerment to these women and to prevent prostitution. This Project helps these girls strengthen their charac-

ter to gain control of their life, and supporting their education and employment so that they can stand on their own.

- Establishing the Self-Empowerment School for teen prostitutes (2009)

The Seoul Metropolitan Government organized 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. Seoul was also planned the details of the Project based on focus group interviews. Thanks to such efforts, South Korea's first Self-Empowerment School was opened in September 2009.

- A second Self-Empowerment School and job training shop opened (2010)

Encouraged by the success of the Self-Empowerment School established in 2009, the Seoul Metropolitan Government decided to open another school in an economically marginalized section of the city. Seoul secured a building for the school in the northern section of Seoul, and opened its second Self-Empowerment School. In 2010, Seoul opened a restaurant-cum-cafe on public land to help the school graduates gain financial independence through learning skills and job training.

- Establishing a system that starts from prevention to early intervention to self-empowerment (2010)

The Seoul Metropolitan Government has been running a late night street counseling service since 2001 to intervene early in the lives of runaway teenagers to prevent teenage prostitution. Teenage girls on the streets were led to shelters and later guided into education and employment through the Self-Empowerment School and the Self-Empowerment Training Shop. By building a system that begin with prevention to early intervention to self-empowerment, the government was able to help teenage women achieve independence and break free from prostitution.

Parties and Partners to the Initiative and Resources Used for Implementation

- Policy proposal by monitoring team, Seoul's strong commitment

The Youth Prostitution Prevention Project is based on an idea proposed by

the Teenage Women Policy Monitoring Team (from the Korean Women's Institute at Ewha Womans University and the Catholic University of Korea) which has been participating, monitoring, and analyzing the counseling and support Project for runaway teenagers and teen prostitutes since 2007. The employee in charge of such affairs in the Seoul Metropolitan Government developed this idea into a policy proposal, which was then executed with the strong support of the Seoul Metropolitan Government. Together with the Monitoring Team consisting of experts in academia, Seoul developed a Project tailored to the needs and reality of teenage women. Seoul's first female vice-mayor, Eunhee Cho, also showed strong support in the Youth prostitution Prevention Project.

- Collecting a wide variety of opinions from the Seoul Metropolitan Government, NGO's, scholars, experts and the general public

The Seoul Metropolitan Government organized a task force team in early 2009 consisting of teenage women experts, scholars in gender studies, and the heads of the alternative school and teenage women shelter - to develop policies to help runaway teenage women. The task force team reviewed the theoretical background and feasibility of the Project through a series of 4 in-depth discussions to come up with the framework for the Youth prostitution Prevention Project. Seoul also hosted regular forums and academies where scholars, the general public, and working level employees could voice their opinions and participate in decision-making. A wide spectrum of opinions were thus collected and reflected in the government policies.

- Teenage women prosumers participate in decision-making

The Seoul Metropolitan Government conducted focus group interviews for two years to encourage the participation of teenage girls and to reflect their needs in the Project. Thanks to such efforts, the Project was able to reflect their honest and realistic opinions. In 2009, Seoul recruited teenage women policy prosumers to understand what type of policies teenage women wanted. Feedback was also regularly collected through the website, so that fresh ideas could be actively reflected in teenage women policy.

The resources used for implementing the initiative include:

- Stable funding through matching fund arrangement the central government

The Seoul Metropolitan Government provided most of the funding of the Self-Empowerment School when it first opened in 2009. The NGO which was entrusted with the management of the school shared the cost, but it was small. The Seoul Metropolitan Government provided the land and buildings and operating costs, as well as the teachers' salaries. As the benefits of the Self-Empowerment School became visible and its needs justified, the central government agreed to a 50:50 matching fund arrangement from 2011 which will help secure more stable funding.

- Technical support: Information exchange through the homepage and making use of company job mentors

In line with high internet usage among teenage women, the school regularly updates its homepage and operates a system where women can make inquiries and get responses. Once a month, a web magazine is sent out to 4,000 people to raise people's awareness of the policies for teenage women. Also, through an agreement with companies, job consulting in areas of interest for teenage women (hair dresser, cook, nurse, etc.) is provided in cooperation with job mentors.

- Human resources: Building partnerships with court, colleges etc.

First, Seoul holds regular consultations on guiding teenage women caught for prostitution to the Self-Empowerment Schools and other post-management issues with judicial institutions such as the court, the National Police Agency and probation offices. Judges, government officials in charge, school teachers and probation officers regularly meet to ensure that the teenage women at the school complete education. Second, the Seoul Metropolitan Government has built a network of NGOs, government and academia representatives and hosted monthly case conferences. Heads of women's shelters, scholars, government officials and school teachers participate in the conferences to identify best approaches for teenage women. Third, Seoul is making use of college student volunteers in cooperation with colleges. The Self-Empowerment Schools form links with local colleges and holds one-on-one mentor-mentee matching classes with student volunteers to encourage teenage women to enjoy learning and earn diplomas.

Innovation for the Initiative

The Seoul Metropolitan Government has continuously agonized over the adoption of revolutionary approaches and strategies to preventing teenage prostitution. In 2001, the Seoul Metropolitan Government was the first local government to implement a support project for high-risk teenage women. Together with a monitoring team representing academia, Seoul developed a special teenage women self-empowerment index, published a best practices manual, and participated in gender cognitive self-empowerment studies.

Then, in 2009, the Seoul Metropolitan Government organized a task force team consisting of experts, professors, and shelter supervisors to seek advice on how to run the Youth Prostitution Prevention Project. Seoul also planned the details of the project based on focus group interviews. To ensure the successful operation of the project, Seoul selected a private institution with abundant experience in working with teenage girls. Seoul was also able to develop a gender-responsive approach to the Youth Prostitution Prevention Project by holding regular meetings with gender studies experts in NGOs, government, and academia.

Thanks to such efforts, the Seoul Metropolitan Government has been able to differentiate its project from existing projects by making it gender-cognitive. It incorporated the gender-sensitive projects and teenage women gender minority group support projects it has developed over the past ten years into its Youth Prostitution Prevention Project. As a result, the latter project was able to establish a system for preventing teenage girl prostitution, offering early intervention services and helping achieve a degree of independence. The system played a central role in preventing the teenage girls from being pulled into the adult prostitution industry and providing them with alternatives to prostitution.

The Youth Prostitution Prevention Project's central strategy is not characterized by such concepts as "protection" and "guidance" but rather by leading these girls towards "self-empowerment".

- ◉ First strategy was to build a continuous system for self-empowerment consisting of education and employment.
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The majority of runaway teenage are school dropouts. For these girls in their late teens (18-19 years old) without middle school degree, there are hardly any schools they can go to even if they want to. They also have almost no chance of finding any stable employment. In response, Seoul established a Self-Empowerment School where they can get their degrees regardless of age. Seoul also established a Self-Empowerment Training Shop where these women can find jobs after they get their degrees - ensuring a continuous self-empowerment system that they can depend on. The Youth Prostitution Prevention Project builds the foundation for self-empowerment for teenage women who have fallen object to prostitution and provides them a turning point which prevents them from becoming adult prostitutes.

- Second strategy was to help these women break free from prostitution through tailored services.

Most runaway teenage girls do not know the alphabet or multiplication table even in their late teens. So the Self-Empowerment School relies on one-on-one tutoring tailored to the different education levels of the women to help them get their degrees. The school also offers basic classes in finance to break their habit of earning and spending of 100,000-200,000 won at a time. Also, through gender-cognitive sexuality education, these women learn to value their bodies and to change their previous attitude that condones selling sex for money. Such tailored self-empowerment services help strengthen their willpower to quit prostitution and begin a new life.

Usually when these young women are arrested by the police for prostitution, the majority are released to their homes or transported to the court and transferred to shelters. Girls who are returned to their homes do not really have any place to return to because they have run away from a difficult home environment in the first place and thus end up roaming the streets again. They generally have no choice but to make the extreme choice of prostitution in order to survive. Those who are transferred to a shelter are also familiar with street life and cannot make the necessary adjustments to the rules and limitations of the shelters. Many of them also end up back on the streets.

The only welfare services for runaway teenage prostitutes thus far provided by the Seoul Metropolitan Government were limited to temporary shelters operated by civil groups. These services, provided from the policy perspective of “protection” and “intervention,” were very limited in their response to the recently changing desires and realities of young people. Thus, the Seoul Metropolitan Government conducted a focus group interview on teenage girls who had run away from home or sold themselves for sex. The results of the interview showed that the greatest desire (66.8%) among runaway youths was employment. However, the temptation of earning a large sum of money (100,000 - 150,000 won from each customer) indicates that it is not easy for them to find other ways of making a living away from prostitution, despite their desire to escape from such a way of life.

In response, the Seoul Metropolitan Government started the Youth Prostitution Prevention Project with the aim of addressing their special needs by helping them receive education, offering them internship programs where they could undergo the process of finding and realizing their dreams. It is through such a “self-empowering” strategy that these youths can be prevented at an early stage from drifting into the adult prostitution industry. Through the Youth Prostitution Prevention Program, it became possible to prevent teenage girls who had run away from home and experienced prostitution from drifting back into prostitution. At present, around 96% of them are preparing for a second life, having received a proper education to enable them to continue on to further education or acquired vocational certifications.

Obstacles and Solutions to the Innovation

- Negative perception among local residents: finding solution in cooperation with district government

The Seoul Metropolitan Government’s effort to find a building for the Self-Empowerment School faced a lot of difficulty because of the negative attitude toward victims of teenage prostitution among the local residents. Since the school would be located in an economically backward district, residents feared that building school would reinforce the negative reputation of the area. In re-

sponse, with the help of the district governments, officials from the Seoul Metropolitan Government directly met with the residents to convince them of the need for the school. Such efforts were enough to create a new perception of the school among the local residents, and the school was able to flourish through the local community network.

- Stigma against teenage runaways and prostitutes: securing internship positions through mentoring agreement with companies

Students of the Self-Empowerment School need internships but it was difficult to find such positions. Many companies did not accept these students because they were once ‘runaway teenagers and prostitutes’ or ‘delinquent teenagers’. In response, Seoul Metropolitan Government went about various institutions to convince them of the importance of job experience for these women. Thanks to such efforts, students were given a chance to work at day care centers and welfare centers run by the Seoul Metropolitan Government, and success cases were publicized. Later, students were able to apply for internships and other work experiences thanks to mentoring agreements that the government signed with large companies such CJ Food-vill and SK-Telecom.

- Problem with drop-outs: adopting a system in which the teenage women make the plans and decisions

The biggest concern in the beginning was that the students would lose interest in learning and drop out. In response, the school gave students the autonomy and responsibility to set their own rules through weekly student council meetings. Also, in the Training Shop, the teenage women were the ones to make decisions regarding the restaurant name, menu etc. so that it would be a place which is run by them. This inspired the women to take responsibility in their work and participate actively.

Outcomes and Assessments

Outcomes achieved are as follows:

The Seoul Metropolitan Government operated a needs-based Youth Prostitution Prevention Project to keep runaway teenage girls from returning to prosti-

tution and to help them stand on their own. The core of this Project is to identify these women early in the process, and build an empowerment system focused on education and employment. Seoul has been operating the country's first late night street counseling services targeting runaway women since 2001 to help identify such women at an early stage. In 2009, Seoul opened the country's first Self-Empowerment School and in 2010, opened a Self-Empowerment Training Shop where its graduates can work. The Youth Prostitution Prevention Project is based on a path of early intervention to education and to employment.

The Self-Empowerment School is an alternative school catered to the special needs of runaway teenage girls and teen prostitutes. The school operates multi-level learning classes, sexuality education, internship etc. And, a survey found that 88% of students thought that the school was helpful in self-empowerment. The Self-Empowerment Training shop is a restaurant-cum-cafe where the graduates of the Self-Empowerment School are employed.

The most valuable achievement of the Project was that these teenage victims of prostitution did not end up back onto the streets and did not make the extreme choice of prostitution. Instead of living the street life, these teenage girls have settled down in their own places and are now preparing for employment. Whereas they were uneducated without any special skills, they are now receiving proper education at the independence schools, and are being offered diverse opportunities to gain experience through internship programs. The program differs from the one-dimensional "vocational training" of the past. Because of these changes, teenage runaway victims of prostitution are able to break the vicious cycle of prostitution and forge ahead with realizing their dreams.

- Increased social awareness of the problems faced by runaway teenage women

The Seoul Metropolitan Government was able to expand its teenage women self-empowerment support Project thanks to the awareness among the public, NGO's, academia of the problems that are faced by teenage women and their commitment to address these problems together. Also, the media played a role in covering these issues (92 times by the internet, newspaper, TV etc.) and forming

a social consensus on its urgency.

- Developing regulatory framework for teenage women policies

The Seoul Metropolitan Government established the legal grounds for its teenage women policies through the ‘counseling of teenage women, prevention of prostitution, safety and health support projects (paragraph 14)’, and ‘prevention of prostitution, victim protection, counseling and rehabilitation support (paragraph 12)’ in the Seoul Metropolitan Government Administration System Establishment Ordinance Enforcement Regulations. Other local governments would have to develop a similar legal framework in order to actively pursue their own teenage women policies.

- Setting an example for other local governments to follow

The Seoul Metropolitan Government was the first in South Korea to establish the Self-Empowerment School and Self-empowerment Training Shop for teenage victims of runaway home and prostitution. The Seoul Metropolitan Government was the first to implement such recommendations in South Korea.

Other local governments (Cheju, Changwon, Yeosu, Busan, and Guro) have visited Seoul’s Self-Empowerment School and Shop and sought advice regarding its operation. Detailed discussions are underway with Busan and other local governments regarding their benchmarking plans for the self-empowerment school. As the Seoul Metropolitan Government was the one to raise the need for self-empowerment support policies for teenage women, it will continue to develop and expand such policies across the nation with even better results going forward.

Assessments are as follows:

The Seoul Metropolitan Government regularly monitors the changes and successes brought about by the project through a monitoring team composed of academia (Ewha Woman’s University, The Catholic University of Korea). The team measures the degree of changes in the girls on a year-round basis through objective indices showing license examination results, college admission, employment, and acquisition of professional certifications. In addition, the monitoring team measures the psychological and emotional changes in the teenage girls

using rate of independence comparison data and personal interviews.

- Educational benefits -in middle and high-school graduation qualification exams, ‘pass’ of 96%

In the Self-Empowerment School, each student is given individualized consideration, resulting in ‘pass’ of 96% in middle and high-school graduation qualification exams. “It was the first time in my life that I felt proud of myself. Now that I have earned my diploma, I am confident that I can meet new challenges.” (An interview with a Self-Empowerment School student)

- Economic benefits - college, employment, professional certificates

Graduates from the Self-Empowerment School either go on to college or get employed. Economic benefits are very important to them and teenagers employed at the Self-Empowerment Training Shops are becoming role models for women who are trying to escape prostitution. “My goal is to learn what I can from this store and later become South Korea’s best barista” (An interview with a staff member of the Self-Empowerment Training Shop).

- Psychological benefits - building self-esteem through emotional support and experiencing success

Teenage girls who have been exposed to long periods of violence received continuous counseling and participated in different Projects. These women built their self-esteem and character by getting diplomas and gaining financial independence, which gave them the inner strength to break free from prostitution

Methods Applied

- Effectiveness of cooperation with NGO’s, government, and academia: building gender governance infrastructure

The Seoul Metropolitan Government has been operating a separate organization dedicated to teenage women policies since for the past decade. This team consists of government employees and contract-based temporary government employees with expert knowledge in women’s studies, welfare, teenager studies, and feminist philosophy. This team works flexibly and in close partnership with NGO’s as it has an independent office (Seoul Resource Center for Young Wom-

en) located 4 miles from City Hall. Because of their identities as both teenagers and female, teenage women are not only easily left behind in policy-making but also do not have many social organizations that can represent their interests. Nevertheless, the Seoul Metropolitan Government boldly placed them in a strategic category of affirmative action to help them grow into the next-generation female citizens through Projects grounded in gender cognitive perspectives.

- Active Citizen Participation and Utilization of Community Networks

The problem of youth prostitution is not a problem arising from individuals' moral defects or choices, but rather one of social structures. Therefore, the Seoul Metropolitan Government has chosen the strategy of inducing active citizen participation and the active utilization of community networks.

A one-on-one mentoring program in which local residents and college students serve as volunteers is being implemented to improve the view of teenage runaways and prostitutes. In addition, famous entertainers (such as Park Kyung-rim and Yoo Ji-tae) are working as “dream mentors” for the independence schools with the aim of inducing the active participation of the public. Also, hospitals, beauty parlors, restaurants, and children’s centers within the communities have joined the network to provide vocational experience and internship opportunities. These organizations meet regularly in meetings and informal discussion sessions to identify and define the roles of the community in helping at-risk teenage girls. These community networks are providing a great impetus toward building a social safety net for at-risk youths.

Benefit to Other Cities

- Raising the Image of the City and Improving National Competitiveness - Youth Prostitution Prevention Project

Prostitution remains a huge pressing issue for diverse nations, cities, and communities. Globally, as prostitution through the Internet becomes ever more prevalent, its modes of entry are diversifying and the age of exposure to prostitution is becoming lower. Prostitution raises the possibility of exposure to other types of crime such as sexual violence, human trafficking, and illegal drugs, and,

as a result, raises the societal costs of nations and cities. In addition, the notoriety of “exporters of female prostitutes”, “sex tours”, and other names associated with prostitution damages the image of those nations and cities, thereby reducing their competitiveness. And, as runaway teenage prostitutes are especially highly prone to becoming adult prostitutes, it is very urgent that policies at the national and city level be set up and supported in order to prevent teenage prostitutes from being pushed back into prostitution.

- Early intervention: core strategy to protect teenagers from adult prostitution

The Youth Prostitution Prevention Project was able to receive positive response from society because of Seoul’s early intervention in helping teenage women with high risks of prostitution. Most of these women ended up in prostitution without a clear conceptualization of what prostitution is. However, the Seoul Metropolitan Government did not brand them as sex offenders. Instead, it provided them with an opportunity to break away from prostitution and empower themselves through the self-empowerment support Project. Unlike adult prostitutes, teenage girls had the resilience to overcome such risks and the unlimited potential to build a new life with their strength and will.

Based on a decade of experience in street counseling and prostitution prevention education, the Seoul Metropolitan Government has developed a Youth Prostitution Prevention Project for teenage women at risk. As a result, new method of self-empowerment were developed such as the Self-Empowerment School and the Self-Empowerment Training Shop through which teenage women can be prevented from returning to prostitution and stand on their own. Thanks to such efforts made by the Seoul Metropolitan Government, these women who once wandered the streets are now given wings with which to they can fly towards their goals and dreams.
