

# Building a Resilient and Inclusive Whole-of-Society Defense

Policy Recommendations for Integrating  
Gender and Diverse Human Rights Perspectives into Taiwan's Social Resilience



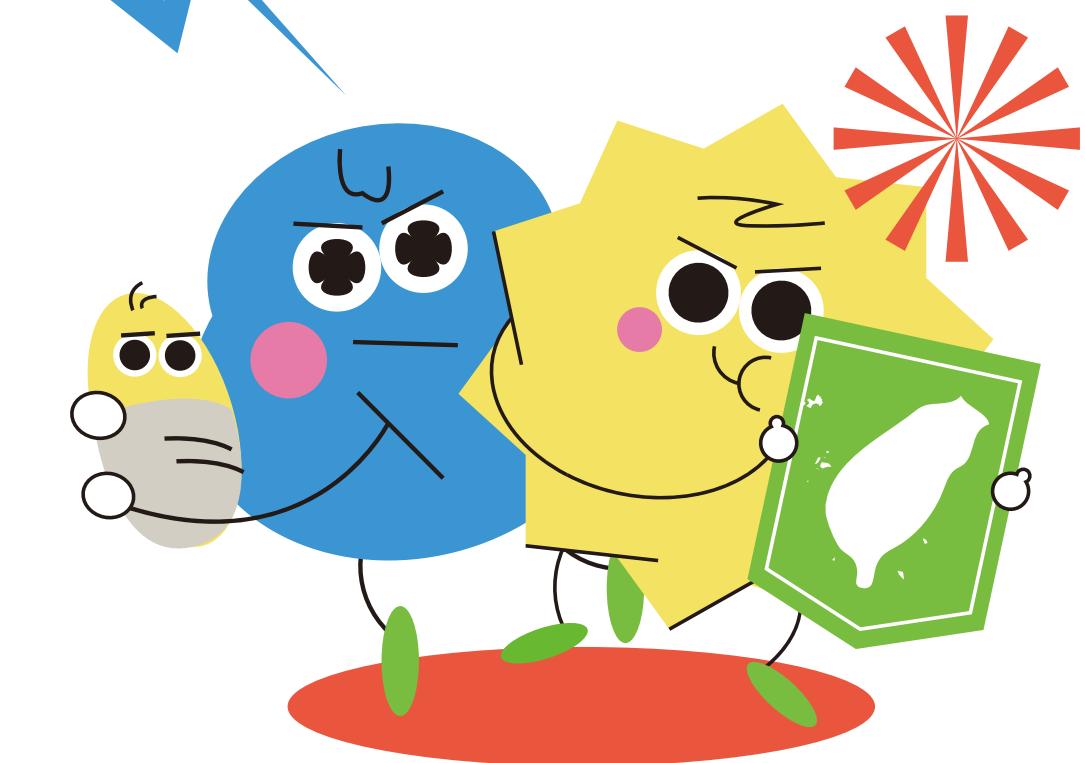
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# Building a Resilient and Inclusive Whole-of-Society Defense

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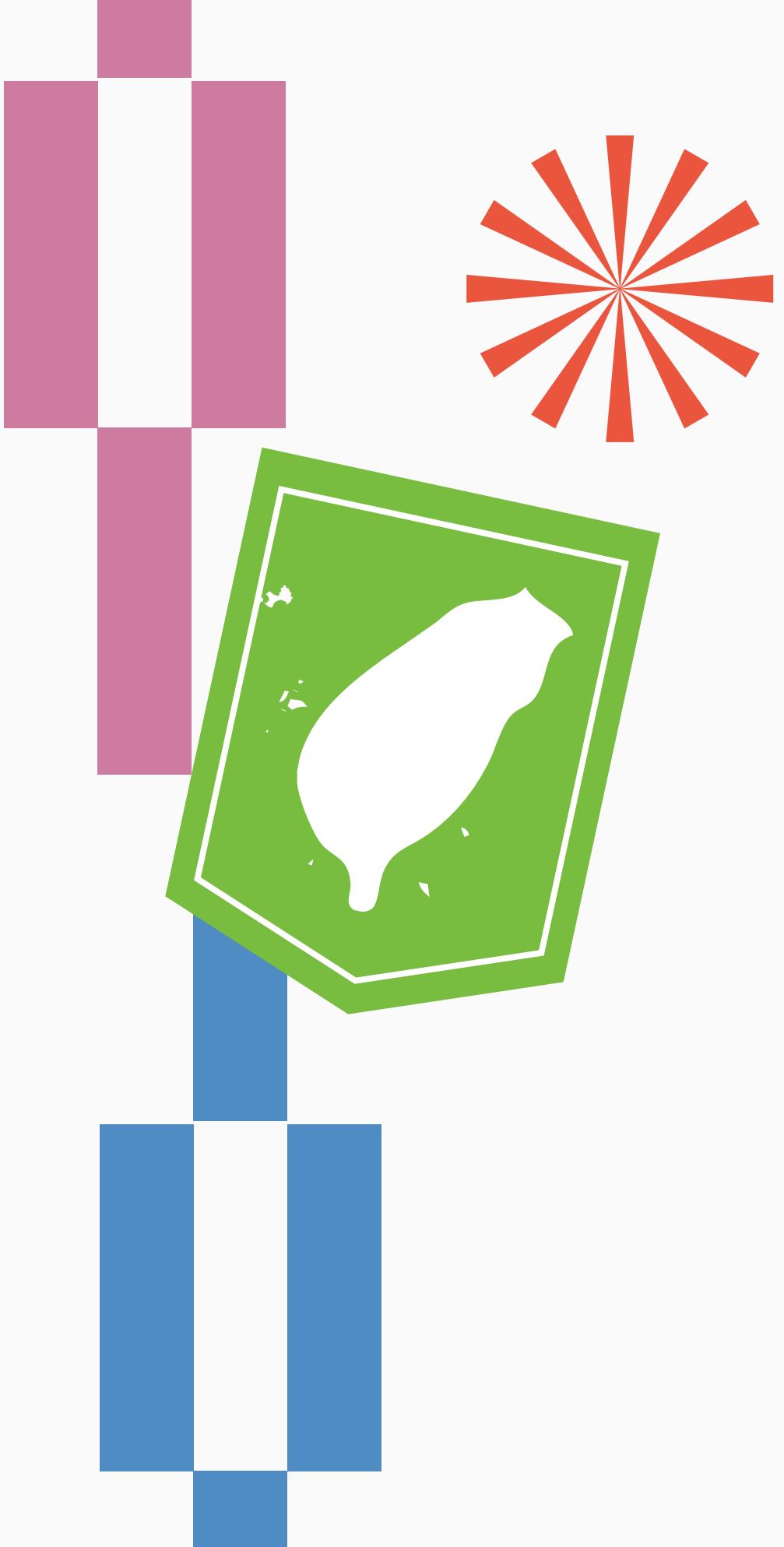
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# **Building a Resilient and Inclusive Whole-of-Society Defense**

## **Executive Summary**

In the face of ongoing and escalating hybrid threats and cognitive warfare from China, both the Taiwanese government and civil society have intensified efforts to strengthen national and civil defense preparedness. Nevertheless, significant gaps remain in scope, quality, and policy coherence, especially in regards to whether the needs and perspectives of all social groups, particularly women and gender-diverse individuals, have been fully considered.

This policy white paper, jointly issued by the Awakening Foundation and its partners, proposes recommendations on how to best embed gender and diverse human rights perspectives into the planning and implementation of Taiwan's whole-of-society defense resilience. The objective is to integrate gender and diverse human rights perspectives into Taiwan's social resilience and whole-of-society defense, recognizing equity, intersectional diversity, and inclusive communication as the foundations of democratic resilience.

This white paper consolidates insights and collaborative efforts from more than thirty civil society organizations committed to advocacy in areas including women's rights, gender diversity, disability, migrant workers and immigrants, Indigenous peoples, human rights, public childcare services, labor rights, civil defense, and information warfare research. It raises critical questions and proposes joint government-civil society solutions to build an inclusive and equitable defense and security framework.



## I. Key Challenges

This white paper compiles recommendations from numerous civil society organizations convened to discuss Taiwan's most pressing national security challenges. The nation faces both the threat of armed conflict and authoritarian attempts to exploit structural inequities through cognitive warfare. These hybrid assaults target civic trust and community solidarity, seeking to fracture them from within. Key challenges include:

**1. Defense efforts still lack broad participation and attention to diverse needs, while basic infrastructure quality and implementation remain inconsistent:**

Structural barriers continue to impede civil defense participation by women and gender-diverse individuals, whose needs remain largely unaddressed. Existing public and private defense systems and resources fail to account for the varied circumstances of different populations and regions. Gaps persist in the serviceability and safety of essential infrastructure, including shelters, emergency broadcasting systems, and disaster-preparedness mobile apps. The role of educational authorities (e.g., the Ministry of Education and educational institutions) in civil defense policy remains poorly defined. Information and education on civil defense are not universally accessible, and mechanisms for sustaining the psychological resilience of essential workers and the general public remain unclear. These structural vulnerabilities diminish the overall effectiveness of public resources.

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2. **Information warfare has evolved into a systemic challenge, driving value-based polarization:** The battlefield has shifted from countering disinformation to a deeper division and contestation within social values themselves. Tensions embedded in debates over gender equity and diversity have been exploited to aggravate internal conflicts. There is growing concern that implementation of civil defense measures at local and community levels may be influenced by political ideologies of local government officials, as well as unease over perceived tensions between human rights protections, democratic values, and national security.

## **II. Policy Recommendations**

This white paper has compiled the recommendations and contributions of workshop participants to offer the following policy recommendations for the next stage of strengthening Taiwan's social resilience:

1. **Ground Civil and National Defense in Taiwan's Democratic Values:**

This white paper recognizes that democratic society in Taiwan draws its strength against external infiltration through its commitment to diversity, intersectionality, equity, and dialogue. These values form not only the foundation of social resilience but also the reason citizens are willing to defend their country. The government and civil society must work together to reinforce the bonds linking defense and democracy, thereby enhancing the public's commitment to defense efforts and countering China's psychological



warfare efforts to undermine confidence and solidarity in Taiwan's democratic system. In concrete terms, policymaking should adhere to three guiding principles:

- a. Equitable protection: National defense frameworks must proactively identify and eliminate barriers that prevent diverse communities from accessing information, facilities, and services, ensuring that essential protections are available to all, thereby ensuring their survival and safety.
- b. Public trust: Maintaining civic trust and solidarity must be treated as a matter of national security. By actively fostering communication and dialogue, society can prevent and mitigate the divisions that external forces might look to exploit.
- c. Inclusive decision-making: Women and diverse communities must be meaningfully represented in defense-related decision-making at the national level through formal institutional channels, ensuring that no perspective is overlooked and that policy reflects the full breadth of society.

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## **2. Institutionalize the Participation of Civil Society and Women in Defense Decision-Making; Strengthen Civil Defense Policy Oversight:**

Decision-making across government agencies must be more transparent and efficient, with mechanisms established to ensure that women and marginalized groups participate in defense policymaking and oversight. The government must also develop effective policy tools to prevent political ideology from influencing civil defense at the local level. Civil society should be formally recognized as a key partner in these efforts, with standing collaboration mechanisms established. The government should also seek out opportunities for open collaboration with civil society.

## **3. Ensure Accessible Facilities, Inclusive Guidelines, and Equitable Access to Information:**

Public resources must be accessible and available. A comprehensive review should be conducted of infrastructure quality—including shelters and temporary accommodation facilities—and used to inform concrete guidance on inclusive and universal design. An information platform should be established by the central government to guarantee equitable access to information, with particular attention to how immigrants and persons with disabilities receive information. In addition, the distribution of emergency supplies should be optimized by developing distribution or rationing mechanisms that do not rely solely on household registration.



4. **Promote Communication and Build Psychological Resilience:** Measures to enhance social trusit and psychological defense should include: developing differentiated civil defense drills and scenario-based guidance; empowering education and child-affairs authorities with clear mandates to ensure children and young people's safety and right to be heard; establishing a nationwide psychological resilience support system that provides sustained assistance for essential workers; and creating responsive defense mechanisms to prevent human rights violations and respond to social controversies.

### III. Future Outlook

This white paper brings together the contributions of civil society organizations from diverse sectors and professional backgrounds. While it may not be exhaustive, this paper argues that sustained cross-sectoral connection, dialogue, and action are essential for Taiwan to transform social diversity from a potential vulnerability into a strong force of societal resilience. In doing so, it aims to offer inspiration across disciplines, serve as a catalyst for future efforts, and provide the international community with a living example of how democratic resilience can stand firm against authoritarian encroachment.

# **Building a Resilient and Inclusive Whole-of-Society Defense**

## **Chapter I. Introduction**

### **1.1 Background and Motivation**

Against China's explicit intent to invade, Taiwan faces escalating threats: grey-zone incursions, united front efforts to divide society, and foreign information manipulation aimed at undermining social cohesion. Such forms of aggression extend far beyond the boundaries of conventional military confrontation; the true battlefield lies within the hearts and minds of society. It is within public discourse and ordinary daily life where mistrust and division is seeded in an attempt to undermine democratic values, institutions, and the collective community formed by Taiwan, Penghu, Kinmen, and Matsu.

In response to these complex challenges, the Taiwanese government has initiated a top-down Whole-of-Society Defense framework built around multiple pillars of social resilience—encompassing civilian capacities, supplies, energy, healthcare, and information and communications. Yet a truly resilient defense system requires more than a policy framework or coordination across government agencies. It must be comprehensive, grounded in the lived realities of all members of society, and attentive to their distinct and very real anxieties and fears.

Current civil defense planning and strategies for countering information warfare

have largely failed to account for the full diversity of needs and vulnerabilities within Taiwanese society. This failure results in tangible inequities in access to defense resources and exposes a strategic blind spot in national security. More critically, it creates systemic risks that, in times of emergency, could lead to violations of citizens' fundamental safety, survival, and human rights.

This white paper therefore seeks to integrate these perspectives into the core of policymaking by supplementing and deepening existing frameworks so that social resilience may be built solidly from the ground up and from within.

## 1.2 Research Process and Participants

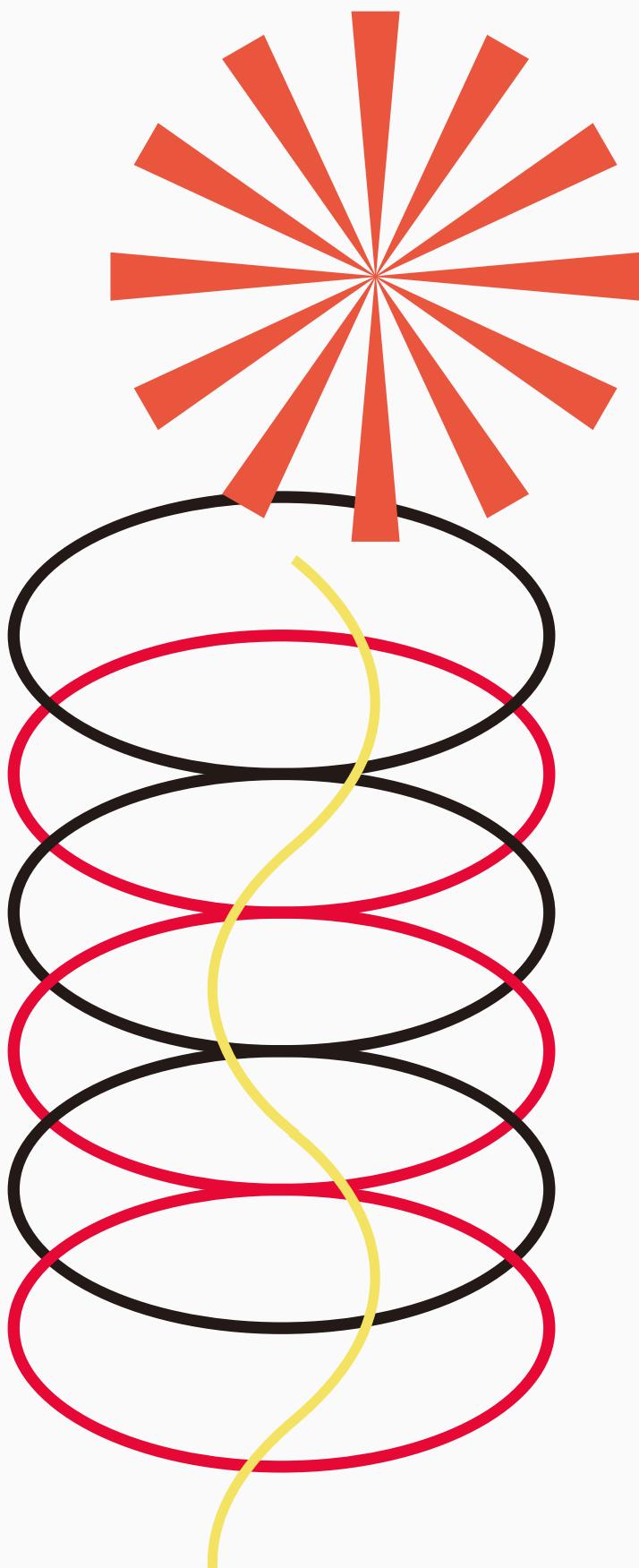
The content of this white paper was developed through a project initiated by the Awakening Foundation, supported by the Taiwan Office of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom (FNF Taiwan), and realized in collaboration with the Taiwan Reach-Out Association for Democracy (T-ROAD) and Watchout. The project's core activities consisted of two thematic workshops held in Taipei between July and August 2025, focusing respectively on civil defense and foreign information manipulation and interference (FIMI). These workshops brought together representatives from more than thirty civil society organizations with longstanding

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commitments to issues relating to women's rights, gender diversity, physical and mental disabilities, migrant workers and immigrants, Indigenous peoples, human rights, public childcare services, labor rights, civil defense practice, and information warfare research. The AI Objectives Institute (AOI) was commissioned to apply its AI analytical tool, Talk to the City, to create a visualization of the topics and concerns raised by participants during the workshop discussions.

Both workshops were conducted under the Chatham House Rule, following a structured agenda and a deliberative dialogue format. The purpose was to create a safe space for frontline practitioners from a range of communities to share their deepest concerns and practical needs, as well as those of the individuals and communities they serve. These exchanges spanned a wide spectrum of lived realities: from childcare workers anxious about caring for children during armed conflict, to persons with disabilities worried about power outages affecting assistive devices; from concerns among transgender and HIV-positive communities regarding access to medication, to reflections on how the manipulation of gender-based values extend beyond the findings of existing information warfare research. Participants did not merely identify problems; they also put forward recommendations for action at both individual and governmental levels. This white paper stands as the collective fruit of those cross-sectoral dialogues—an effort to translate authentic voices from civil society into a concrete and actionable policy blueprint.

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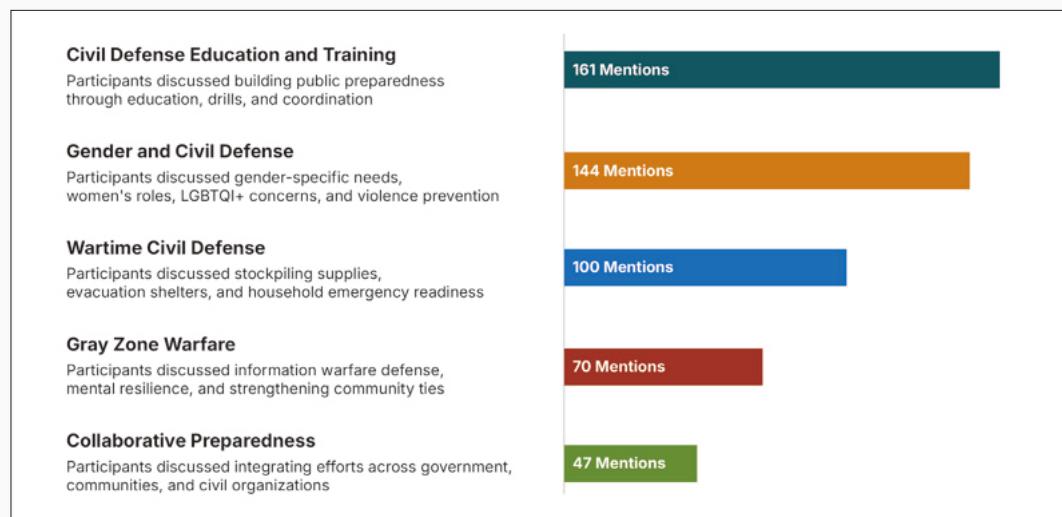
## **Building a Resilient and Inclusive Whole-of-Society Defense**

# **Chapter II.** **Current Gaps, Security Risks, and Human Rights Concerns**

Following the two workshops, participants raised a wide range of issues and needs. Using Talk to the City's analytical findings, we visualized these in a series of charts highlighting the major themes and trends of concern among participants. The Awakening Foundation then conducted an analysis to the discussion transcription to identify the issues most directly related to gender and intersectionality, with particular attention to urgent or overlooked issues.

## **2.1 Issues Raised by Participants**

Workshop participants observed that civil defense education and training are the areas requiring the most attention in current policies and public discussion. They also noted that gender perspectives and the needs of diverse groups remain insufficiently addressed.



\* We manually edited the English translation of the text on Figure 1-4 to enhance the preciseness and conciseness of languages under the limitation of number of text, so the text is different from what has been generated by Talk to the City (T3C). However, the results of analysis remain unchanged and readers can still link to the following webpages to see the original analysis generated by (T3C).

1. [Diverse and inclusive needs in civil defense.](#)
2. [Policy measures and action plans for enhancing diversity and inclusion in civil defense.](#)
3. [Experiences of information manipulation.](#)
4. [Policy measures and action plans to counter information manipulation.](#)

Workshop participants identified the following areas where information, policy measures, and action plans are urgently needed to fill gaps in current civil defense policy:

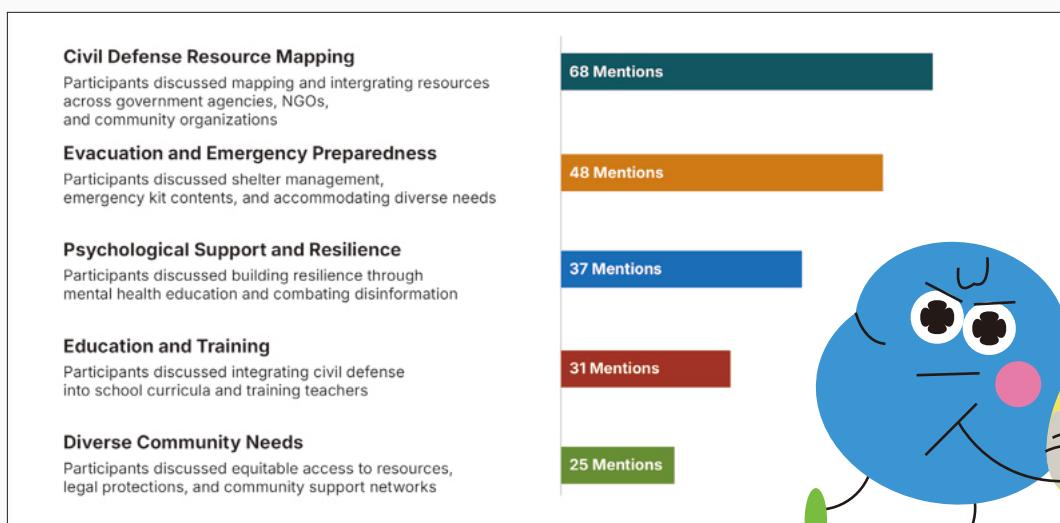
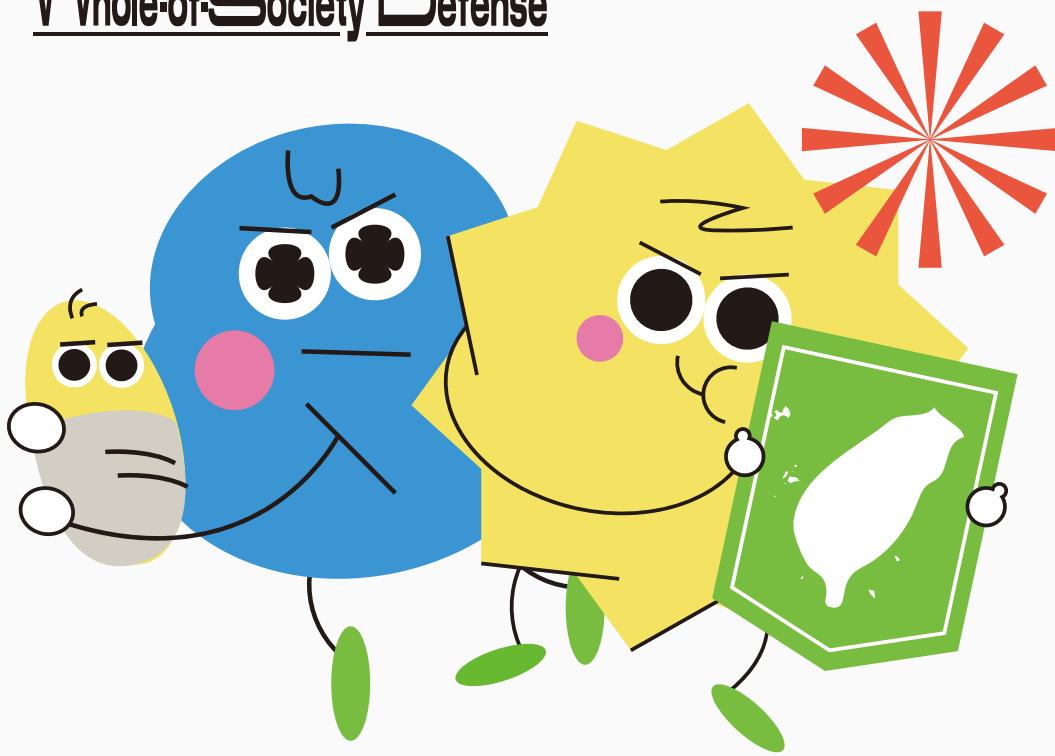


Figure 2\*

## Building a Resilient and Inclusive Whole-of-Society Defense



Most participants reported encountering suspected information manipulation more often around everyday topics (e.g., child abuse, parent-teacher relations) than around foreign affairs, national defense, or partisan politics.

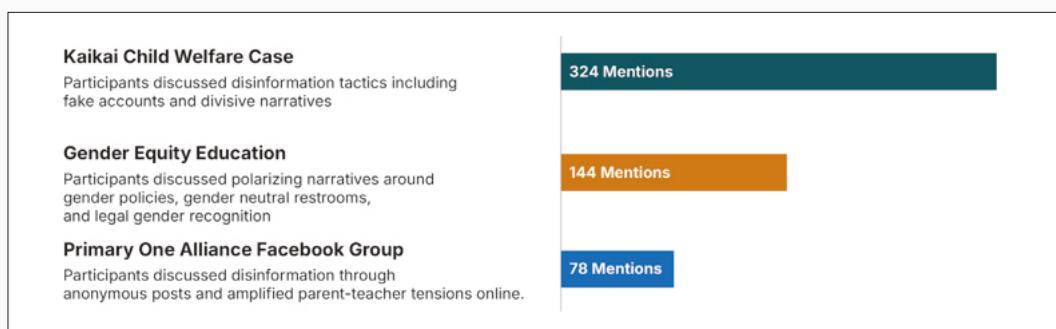


Figure 3\* <sup>12</sup>

## Policy Recommendations for Integrating Gender and Diverse Human Rights Perspectives into Taiwan's Social Resilience

- 1 The Kaikai case refers to a child welfare incident in Taiwan involving a one-year-old boy who was fatally abused by his carers in late 2023. Although reported to the police at the time, the case did not receive widespread media attention until the 2024 presidential election, when it sparked public outcry on social media. Some online commentary appeared to be designed solely to inflame public sentiment. In 2025, numerous accounts on Instagram, TikTok, and other platforms were found to be disseminating AI-generated videos and images in a coordinated manner, promoting the narrative that the Taiwanese central government bore sole responsibility for the incident while absolving local authorities. Some images shared by these accounts depicted individuals who appeared to be Chinese citizens holding signs calling for justice for Kai Kai, signed "From China." These accounts also circulated coverage of the case from PRC media outlets.
- 2 The Primary One Alliance is a public Facebook group with hundreds of thousands of members, primarily parents of primary school children. Originally a forum for sharing parenting experiences, the group has increasingly become a venue for accusations and heightened conflict. Educators have been labelled "abusive teachers," while some parents have been branded "overbearing." The growing prevalence of such posts has concerned many of our participants, who have questioned whether malicious manipulation may be involved.

Workshop participants identified the following key areas that should be discussed and addressed in action plans to counter information manipulation:

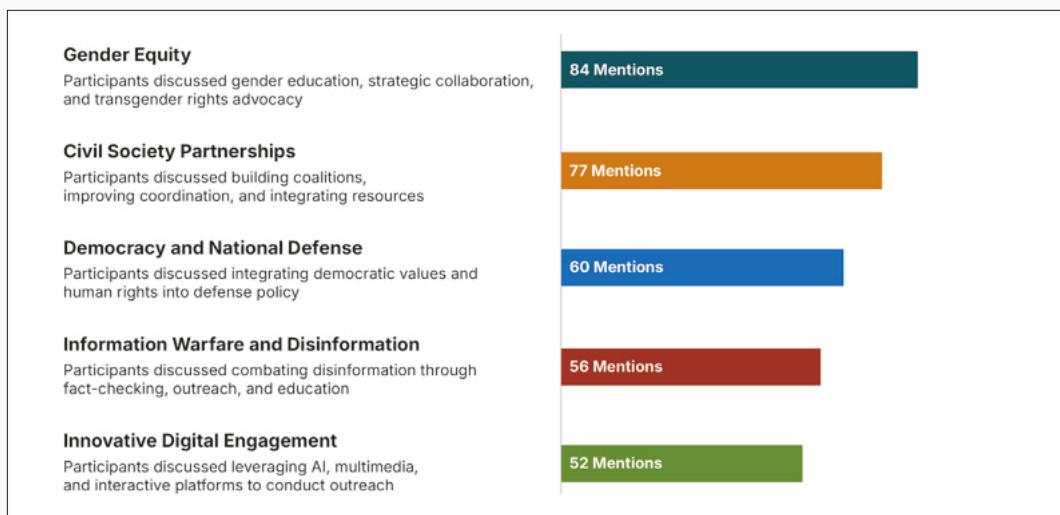


Figure 4\*

# **Building a Resilient and Inclusive Whole-of-Society Defense**

## **2.2 Issues Identified by Organizers**

### **A. Barriers to Participation for Women and Gender-Diverse Individuals**

Statistics consistently show the majority of citizens participating in civil defense training in Taiwan are actually women. Many capable women are also active in both public and private civil defense institutions. Why, then, has this substantial and accomplished presence not been recognized in existing policies? Why are women not regarded as a key group capable of contributing to decision-making? And why have the strengths and perspectives of women—and of gender-diverse communities—not yet been fully reflected in policymaking? Participants offered the following insights:

#### **1. Men Have Long Dominated Civil and National Defense Discourse**

Civil defense is undeniably a crucial pillar of national defense. However, some participants observed that when policy discussions excessively conflate civil and national defense, this—compounded by the male-dominated nature of the national defense sector—can push women and gender-diverse individuals out of the conversation.

Part of the problem is that the national defense system remains dominated by men. Another issue is how civil defense is currently positioned as either conflated with national defense or defined

as subordinate to it. When civil defense is conflated with national defense, it is assumed, like national defense, to "naturally be" a male domain. When civil defense is defined as ancillary to national defense, discussions inevitably carry the sentiment that combat roles are relatively more important than logistical or civilian support work. In this framing, civil defense is seen as insufficiently masculine, loses priority, and receives inadequate attention in planning, while all discussions remain male-dominated and oriented toward national defense priorities. Participants noted that this mindset has shaped education policy, creating an expectation that female students do not need military knowledge. For example, at most universities, military training courses remain compulsory only for male students. Ultimately, this approach leads to a notable gap in defense literacy between women and men.

Participants from LGBTIQ+ and gender-diverse communities further reflected that, although some individuals assigned male at birth share the same desire to defend Taiwan, discussions of civil defense often trigger distressing memories of past experiences during compulsory military service—where they may have experienced or witnessed mistreatment due to the dominant masculine culture and insufficient gender-sensitivity training. Such experiences discourage them from engaging with civil defense discussions.

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## **2. Structural Barriers Limit Women's Participation in Civil Defense**

Some participants noted that many women working in childcare, education, or domestic caregiving express a genuine willingness to participate in civil defense training. However, heavy workloads and caregiving burdens limit their capacity to do so. Many also live and work within relatively closed communities and networks, which restricts their access to information. The pressures of daily life frequently lead to fatigue and resignation, leaving many to wonder why they should have to worry about civil defense on top of everything else.

## **B. Civil Defense Systems Overlook Diverse Needs**

In recent years, the government has made notable progress in strengthening civil defense preparedness, including nationwide inventorying of emergency shelters and the development of integrated training exercises. Yet behind these macro-level figures and institutional frameworks, the needs of many communities remain unaddressed. The absence of community-specific scenario planning leaves significant gaps—gaps that may not only result in violations of basic survival rights and human rights but also pose threats to national security.

Additionally, existing civil defense infrastructure and preparedness measures vary widely in quality. Implementation also differs across local

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3 In Taiwan, "village" is the official English translation for a local administrative unit roughly equivalent to a neighborhood, used in both rural and urban areas. The elected official at this level is formally translated as the "village chief." This document uses the official translations throughout.



governments and communities with limited oversight. Members of the public have expressed concerns that the political orientation of mayors or village chiefs may affect whether local civil defense is carried out diligently or consistently.<sup>3</sup> Finally, disparities in civil defense resources between urban and rural areas also remain a challenge.

## 1. Gaps in the Serviceability and Safety of Infrastructure

### (1) Emergency Shelters and Accommodation

Although the government has inventoried the total available shelter space nationwide and shelter capacity is theoretically sufficient to accommodate Taiwan's population, participants noted that the actual serviceability of many of these facilities is highly questionable. Many underground floors in high-rise buildings are designated as shelters but have not been properly equipped to serve as such—either because building management or homeowner associations are unwilling to take on the responsibility, or because there is no enforcement compelling them to do so. As a result, the public may not know where to find nearby shelters, let alone which ones are accessible to people with disabilities.

A yellow cartoon character with large, expressive eyes and a small pink question mark on its forehead, positioned in the bottom left corner of the page.

Many participants were also unaware of the distinction between "air-raid shelters"—designed for short-term refuge—and "evacuation shelters" intended for longer-term habitation. Others pointed out that for the latter, it remains unclear whether essential

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infrastructure (e.g., ventilation, water supply, and power systems) is adequate to sustain prolonged stays.

The government has yet to establish detailed plans that anticipate the practical realities of different social groups living together in these facilities for extended periods. The Guidelines for the Maintenance and Operation of Large-Scale Typhoon and Earthquake Disaster Evacuation and Accommodation Shelters in Special Municipalities and Counties (Cities) do specify that such facilities

should take into account the installation and maintenance of accessible infrastructure, water storage and power generation or backup systems, broadcasting or communication equipment, evacuation signage and fire safety systems, bathing and sanitation facilities, as well as kitchens or cooking equipment, and should accordingly prepare supporting measures and alternative plans. In addition, due consideration should be given to the privacy of evacuees, with spatial arrangements designed to reflect gender diversity—including differences in biological sex, gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation.

However, there remains a lack of information on how these arrangements are to be made.



Furthermore, existing plans lack adequate safety considerations for women and LGBTQ+ individuals—for example, gender-inclusive restrooms, spatial design to prevent gender-based violence, and practical guidelines for addressing it. Plans also fail to address clean breastfeeding spaces and equipment; designated safe areas and protection guidelines for children; and the accessibility needs of persons with disabilities, including ramps, handrails, emergency call buttons, and the additional space required by wheelchair users.

These planning gaps reflect not only a disregard for citizens' equal right to survival but also a direct risk to national security. In times of war, if large numbers of people are unable to quickly access shelters, or if they were to face secondary harm within them, the result would be widespread panic, excessive strain on medical resources, and paralysis of disaster-response systems. Such a scenario would amount to a systemic failure of defense resilience itself.

Some participants also shared their experiences assisting with civil defense drills, noting that current drills and evacuation plans treat individuals as the basic unit of planning rather than families. In reality, however, wartime emergencies would likely require entire families to seek shelter together, including pets. This raises practical questions: Would pets be denied entry? Would families be allowed to stay together within the same designated area?

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In addition, participants pointed out that the conditions and availability of shelters in rural areas may differ significantly from those in urban environments. In some rural regions, it may even be difficult to locate underground facilities suitable for sheltering. Yet, to date, no specific policies have been formulated to address these discrepancies.

## **(2) Broadcasting Systems**

Some participants noted that in certain areas, local radio broadcasts are frequently overridden by Chinese radio frequencies, raising concerns that in wartime such interference could severely disrupt the transmission of information. Others noted that broadcasting systems in local village offices have not been tested in a long time.

## **(3) Disaster Preparedness Mobile Applications**

Several participants reported inconsistencies between the shelter locations displayed on official disaster-preparedness apps and the actual conditions on the ground.

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4 For a definition of "new immigrant," please see Article 2 of the New Immigrants Basic Act.



## 2. Civil Defense Information and Education Lack Accessibility and Inclusivity

While current planning emphasizes public communication, existing civil defense information generally lacks multilingual support. As a result, hundreds of thousands of migrant workers and new immigrants are left in information silos, creating severe information inequity.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, participants pointed out a lack of adequate channels and formats to ensure that individuals with various disabilities can access and understand civil defense and evacuation information. This fails to comply with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), which mandates that states ensure persons with disabilities have equitable access to all information, especially information concerning their safety and survival.

As of the end of August 2025, Taiwan is home to approximately 612,000 immigrant spouses and 854,000 migrant workers, as well as about 54,000 individuals with documented visual impairments and nearly 140,000 with hearing impairments.<sup>5<sup>6</sup>7</sup> Due to differences in written or spoken communication needs, these individuals may be unable to immediately understand air-raid alarms or broadcast instructions, or to quickly comprehend evacuation information issued by the government

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5 [Statistics from the National Immigration Agency, Ministry of the Interior](#)

6 [Statistics from the Ministry of Labor](#)

7 [Statistics from the Ministry of Health and Welfare](#)

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or local village chiefs. In addition, official communications often remain at the level of general advisories (e.g., prepare an emergency go-bag) without providing specific scenario-based guidance that addresses the public's real concerns. This systemic information gap creates collective vulnerability that could threaten social stability and provide openings for external aggressors to exploit, generating confusion and internal conflict.

Participants further observed that it is not only these groups who lack adequate information; even among the general public, fundamental civil defense information has not been sufficiently promoted. Many stated that they do not know how resource allocation or rationing would be organized during wartime.

Participants also pointed out that current civil defense information lacks scenario-based planning grounded in the realities of different professions and everyday life, with little guidance on the kinds of wartime conditions people might face. How long can basic services be sustained? How would the financial system continue to operate? Which buildings would be primary targets? How would evacuation work on public transportation? These questions remain unanswered. Participants also noted that regional contexts differ—southern Taiwan contains key ports, while the north houses the political center—



raising the question of whether civil defense guidance should vary accordingly.

Participants further observed that the general public is eager to learn about civil defense and that civil defense organizations should be given resources to conduct training programs. However, in the absence of effective coordination, disparities have emerged in civil defense education and training. Those with more time and financial means can afford to enroll in courses or secure limited training slots, while such opportunities remain scarce or unavailable in rural areas.

### 3. Insufficient Understanding of Diverse Community

The greatest blind spot in current planning is the assumption that the general public is a homogenous, uniform population. In practice, this results in unequal protection within the defense system and may lead to systemic human rights violations. A defense framework that cannot safeguard all members of society equally will inevitably lack strong internal cohesion. Participants raised the following issues:

#### (1) Women and Caregivers

During the workshop discussions, women participants shared that in times of crisis, their responsibilities extend beyond ensuring

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their own safety; they must also shoulder primary caregiving duties within their families and communities. Their anxieties are not limited to the dangers of shelling and explosions, but to questions such as: "Will there be enough diapers for the baby?" "Where can I get my elderly parent's medication?" Current resource-preparedness plans largely overlook essentials such as menstrual products (or alternative menstrual products that could be utilized in the event of shortages), infant formula, and basic medical needs for women, infants, and children. This oversight invisibly adds to the physical and psychological burden placed on women and caregivers during emergencies.

Taiwan's population is aging rapidly, and the number of elderly people living alone is increasing each year. According to government records, there are currently 62,063 elderly individuals officially registered as living alone, of whom 36,455 (58.74%) are women.<sup>8</sup> Another growing concern is the heightened risk of gender-based violence during periods of tension or armed conflict. Evidence from conflict zones around the world has shown that threats may come not only from enemy forces but also from within one's own ranks, or from domestic and community spaces. Those at risk include not only women but also other vulnerable groups such as LGBTIQ+ individuals, children, and persons with disabilities.



## (2) LGBTIQ+ Communities

Current systems for distributing or rationing goods are predominantly organized around household registration, a structure that raises concerns for same-sex couples who are not legally married. They worry that, in times when they need each other most, the absence of a legally recognized relationship may prevent them from accessing essential resources together.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, because Taiwan's same-sex marriage law does not include presumption of parentage, the legal relationship between a child and one of the parents must be established through adoption. Should the courts or social welfare systems cease to function during conflict, interruptions to adoption procedures could leave many families in legal limbo with parental relationships unrecognized.

In addition, transgender individuals' access to hormone therapy and HIV-positive persons' access to antiretroviral medication are not currently included in emergency medical planning. Interruptions

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8 [Statistics from the Ministry of Health and Welfare](#)

9 Unmarried heterosexual couples may face similar difficulties; however, LGBTIQ+ organizations are particularly focused on this issue because same-sex marriage, though legally recognized in Taiwan, still faces social resistance. While acceptance has increased year by year, a survey by the Taiwan Equality Campaign found that over one-third of the public still does not support same-sex marriage. This suggests that same-sex partners may still face social pressure that discourages them from marrying. See Central News Agency. 2024. "Poll Shows Record-High Support for Same-Sex Marriage; 60% Back Artificial Reproduction for Lesbian Couples."

<https://www.cna.com.tw/news/ahel/202405170092>

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in these treatments would not only jeopardize their health and survival, but for transgender persons, could also inflict profound psychological harm tied to their gender identity.

### **(3) Persons with Disabilities**

Workshop participants from disability-related organizations painted a deeply concerning picture: in the event of an air-raid siren, those who are visually impaired may hear the alarm but have no way of knowing which direction to go; those with hearing impairments may see the chaos but be unable to hear instructions. Most existing shelters rely on stairways for entry and exit, leaving wheelchair users with no way in. Information dissemination also lacks braille, sign language interpretation, and easy-read formats, creating severe barriers for people with visual, hearing, and cognitive disabilities. Most critically, many individuals with disabilities depend on life-support equipment—such as ventilators and aspirators—that require stable electricity and water supply. To date, no clear contingency plans exist for sustaining these essential systems during outages, effectively denying persons with disabilities an equal chance at survival.



#### (4) Migrant Workers and Immigrants

Hundreds of thousands of migrant workers and new immigrants are almost entirely excluded from civil defense training and information dissemination due to language barriers and differences in how and where they access information. This exclusion puts them at greater risk. A large proportion of these individuals serve as care workers or domestic caregivers, often responsible for people who depend on their assistance. If critical information fails to reach them, both the caregivers and those in their care are endangered.

#### 4. Educational Authorities and Civil Defense: Unclear Roles and Insufficient Resources for Children

Many participants reported not knowing how to explain the possibility of war or the necessary preparations to children. While this is not an easy task, it is essential to mentally prepare children and teach them how to ensure their own safety, and therefore to incorporate this topic into school education. At present, however, the Ministry of Education and schools lack clear policies and guidelines to this end. Although parents and teachers have a responsibility to educate their children and students, participants reported that when individual teachers or parents try to teach civil defense knowledge, they risk being accused of pushing a political agenda—even when they carefully curate their

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own materials. If the central government were to mandate and provide educational guidelines while communicating openly about the rationale, such accusations would be less likely to occur or, at the very least, would not hinder the educational process.

Furthermore, children and students at all levels, from preschool through university, face the possibility of conflict suddenly erupting while they are in class. Yet the government has not developed, nor required schools to establish, any wartime evacuation and safety protocols. There are no official guidelines on evacuation drills, building safety, emergency preparedness, or the contents of school emergency kits. Consequently, most schools lack contingency plans, and many teachers are unsure how to lead students to safety in such situations. If a school were to come under attack and students could not return home right away, how would emergency supplies be distributed on campus? After an attack, how would communication with parents be ensured so that children could be safely reunited with their families? And since some schools may be requisitioned as emergency shelters during wartime, what preparations should they undertake in advance? Addressing these issues requires the Ministry of Education and local education bureaus to take responsibility for supervising and advising schools to ensure they are adequately prepared.



Participants also questioned whether the root of the problem lies in the lack of clarity about how the Ministry of Education and other education-related agencies fit into civil defense policymaking. They further noted that the government's current Whole-of-Society Defense Resilience Committee lacks representation from the Ministry of Education, as well as from experts in child welfare, early childhood care, and education.

In addition, participants expressed concern that adults unable to cope with the high-stress environment of wartime shelters may leave children particularly vulnerable to violence or abuse. The development of relevant guidelines and educational training programs is therefore of critical importance.

## 5. Challenges and Resilience Gaps for Essential Workers

The needs and challenges of professionals who sustain the core functions of society are often overlooked in current civil defense planning. Childcare personnel, for example, bear the heavy responsibility of caring for young children in a crisis, yet they lack official response guidelines and do not know how to communicate with parents in such situations. One participant who worked in a preschool stated, "No one has told us: if a conflict starts, should I prioritize my

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own child, or should I stay here to look after twenty other people's children?" Similarly, while medical and social welfare workers are considered essential to emergency response, frontline capacity is directly affected if their own mental and physical health and family care needs are not taken into consideration. These resilience gaps among essential workers represent potential breaking points for society under stress. Furthermore, since many of these professionals are women, this highlights how the challenges women face in conflict scenarios remain a frequently overlooked dimension of resilience.

## **6. Psychological Resilience**

Beyond material preparedness, the collective anxiety and individual sense of helplessness provoked by the threat of war remain among the most neglected aspects of current civil defense planning. Many citizens, especially young people, may feel adrift because they do not know how to plan for the future. Activists shared that long-term information warfare has rendered them politically exhausted and burned out to the point of becoming numb to public affairs. Parents and caregivers, meanwhile, struggle with how to discuss war with their children and elders. They are afraid of traumatizing them, yet unwilling to lie, making it difficult to incorporate defense preparedness into daily routines. One participant mentioned that men expect to



be conscripted in such scenarios, which also creates significant psychological pressure. Without systematic psychological support, society's collective psychological resilience will continue to erode, and this erosion is precisely one of the main targets of an aggressor's gray-zone warfare tactics.

### C. Political Ideology as a Barrier to Local and Community Implementation

Many participants worried that local government leaders or village chiefs with conflicting political beliefs might implement civil defense responsibilities reluctantly and inadequately. Many expressed a desire for communities to self-organize at the village (neighborhood) level, but the possibility that a village chief's political leanings might be unsupportive immediately discouraged them from pursuing the idea. Some even expressed worries around village chiefs abandoning their duties and surrendering during wartime, yet participants could not identify effective supervisory or accountability mechanisms that could address this issue. Participants who have been involved in conducting emergency drills also shared that local governments should provide support to the civil servants responsible for executing drills and civil defense operations. They recalled an instance where a single official handled all aspects of emergency drill planning and execution, raising serious concerns about workload.

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## **D. The Information Battlefield: Beyond Fact-Checking**

While the government has made countering cognitive warfare a priority, information warfare researchers and workshop participants argue that cognitive warfare is no longer limited to disinformation. Instead, it involves mixing genuine and false information and exploiting existing social controversies to shift public attention, polarize viewpoints, obstruct substantive discussion, and erode social trust. The goal is a more nuanced and complex attack on shared values and identity.

### **1. Gender and Diversity Issues Exploited to Intensify Existing Conflicts**

Participants noted that in addition to national defense, foreign policy, and partisan politics, various domestic social issues have become increasingly contentious in recent years. These include the influx of migrant workers, parent-teacher conflicts,<sup>10</sup> abolition of the death penalty, surrogacy, requirements for legal gender change, and child abuse.

Among these controversies, there are frequent traces of suspected foreign information manipulation and interference (FIMI). One tactic is to use simplified, one-sided, or misleading messages and

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<sup>10</sup> Several participants observed that shortly before the end of the summer vacation, numerous anonymous and emotionally charged posts suddenly appeared in the Primary One Alliance—a Facebook group with hundreds of thousands of elementary school parents—accusing a number of "abusive teachers" and "overbearing parents," thereby intensifying tensions and antagonism between educators and parents.



inflammatory rhetoric to quickly polarize what should be substantive public discussion into emotional conflict, thereby exacerbating social divisions. This makes it difficult for people holding different positions to engage in meaningful dialogue. The strategic objective behind such an operation is not merely to create division, but more fundamentally, to undermine Taiwanese society's fragile sense of shared community.

In addition to using controversial issues to divide communities, they may also exploit political differences within families, between generations, or among people with different backgrounds and migration histories. The goal is to create an atmosphere of suspicion in which friend and foe are difficult to distinguish, thereby eroding the foundational trust that citizens have in the government, public institutions, and even in each other.

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## **2. Challenges to Civil Society Resilience**

### **(1) Challenges in Detecting Cognitive Manipulation and Chinese Intervention**

Many participants mentioned that when a social controversy arises, it is difficult to determine whether someone is intentionally engaging in cognitive manipulation, and even harder to judge whether foreign influence is involved, because "controversy is normal in a democracy." Online discussions may involve numerous anonymous accounts expressing views and experiences. Assessing the veracity of such claims is difficult, as is judging whether a controversy is being exaggerated, downplayed, or accurately represented.

As one of the workshop lecturers noted, in practice it is often difficult to confirm whether China has played a role in the dissemination of certain messages, or at which specific points and through what methods it has done so. The lecturer also warned against being too quick to label certain debates or statements as FIMI, as this would only dilute the concept. However, as the technology for generating and disseminating information continues to advance, particularly with the rapid evolution of AI, identifying



and analyzing FIMI is becoming an increasingly specialized skill. How to identify and respond to suspected cognitive manipulation remains a source of confusion for many participants.

## (2) When and How to Respond to Controversy

One participant raised a question about inflammatory rhetoric targeting topics related to their advocacy work: if they suspect such rhetoric is the result of information manipulation, should they simply refrain from responding, to avoid depleting their organization's limited energy and resources? Another participant argued that ignoring escalating public opinion does not feel like an option, yet they are also unsure what practical action to take. This is particularly true when a controversy has already erupted, emotions are running high, and any attempt by the organization to express an opinion or issue a clarification is easily drowned out or twisted. Developing a response and finding an effective strategy requires considerable time and effort from advocacy organizations, which are often willing but unable to keep up.

As an example, one participant cited a recent controversy in which claims circulated online that bringing in Indian migrant workers

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would threaten the safety of Taiwanese women. They argued that if this controversy was truly triggered by information manipulation, the manipulators clearly understood their target well. Migrant worker groups and women's groups in Taiwan are generally small, overstretched, and have limited resources. When a controversy like this suddenly flares, their capacity to respond immediately is very limited. This illustrates that using manipulative messages to pit marginalized groups against each other can be a highly effective form of attack.

### **(3) Labeling Attacks Against Civil Society Organizations**

Civil society organizations (CSOs) frequently face smear campaigns, being labeled as "DPP proxies," "CCP collaborators," or "American puppets." Being tagged with these political labels undermines their public credibility. Furthermore, when controversies involving them are amplified, it erodes internal trust within civil society. This type of attack is intended to undermine the role of civil society as democracy's second line of defense. When CSOs see their public trust and financial support affected by continuous attacks, and when frontline workers experience burnout due to unbearable pressure, this is not merely an operational crisis for individual organizations. It represents a significant impairment to the resilience of society and democracy as a whole.



#### (4) Balancing Human Rights, Democracy, and National Security

During discussions, several participants raised two controversial incidents involving Chinese spouses (Chinese nationals who immigrated to Taiwan by/through/marriage) in the first half of 2025. One involved a social media influencer, a Chinese spouse named Ya Ya, who publicly posted support for China's unification of Taiwan by military force, leading the Taiwanese government to order her deportation. The other involved a Chinese spouse livestreaming near an elementary school and filming students and the campus, for which police initiated legal proceedings on suspicion of privacy violations.

Such incidents have drawn considerable scrutiny and criticism toward Taiwan's democracy. Some commentators used these cases to claim that Taiwan's democratic system is no different from China's authoritarian regime, arguing that both disregard human rights—an argument intended to promote the idea that democracy is futile. Participants noted that advocacy groups often face a profound dilemma: their mission is to monitor the government, strengthen democracy, and defend gender equity and human rights. Yet they also recognize that, despite controversies over individual cases, the national security threat posed by a hostile state is real. How, then, should advocacy organizations respond when these values appear to come into conflict?

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Other participants pointed out that their organizations represent minority communities within Taiwan—such as Indigenous peoples, new immigrants, and Chinese spouses—whose voices are often marginalized within a dominant political framework based on a binary division (with the DPP camp assumed to represent pre-WWII residents of Taiwan, or benshengren, and the KMT camp assumed to represent post-WWII immigrants from China, or waishengren). They questioned whether Taiwanese society truly shares a consensus that Taiwan is a multiethnic nation and that minority groups are an integral part of its democracy. For these communities, maintaining their agency and advocating for their rights becomes even more difficult in the context of information manipulation.

### **3. Information Manipulation Targeting Vulnerable Groups**

Participants noted that immigrants and migrant workers often rely on different information channels than the general Taiwanese population, making them more susceptible to misinformation. For example, within many migrant worker communities, platforms such as TikTok play a central role in information consumption, leaving these communities comparatively more exposed to content manipulated by Chinese information operations.



Participants also described two key vulnerabilities faced by persons with disabilities. The first involves physical or cognitive limitations that restrict access to information sources; for some, even leaving the home can be difficult, meaning they may rely on whatever sources happen to be accessible to them. The second concerns the risk that politically motivated actors or Chinese influence operations may seek to shape political judgments through promises of medical assistance or personal relationships. Because many individuals with disabilities depend on steady support—which often requires quick access to significant resources—and because certain political figures and religious or political groups frequently donate or provide medical and financial aid, recipients may come to endorse the donors' political views, whether out of genuine belief, a sense of personal obligation, or the influence of caregivers and immediate community members. Should these groups deliberately spread pro-Beijing messaging, people with disabilities become more susceptible. Furthermore, participants noted that because manufacturing facilities for many critical medications are located in China, there have been numerous cases of China exploiting the need for these vital drugs to carry out united front work.

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# **Chapter III. Policy Recommendations: Building and Implementing Whole-of-Society Resilience**

To fill the gaps in the current system and move toward a truly equitable and inclusive whole-of-society defense, we have compiled participants' feedback into the following action and policy recommendations at the individual, societal, and government levels.

### **3.1 Actions Individuals Can Take**

1. Begin self-organizing with close friends to learn civil defense knowledge and practice preparedness skills.
2. Find a civil defense training partner. Many participants reported that what they learned in civil defense courses is easily forgotten without regular practice. Having friends to practice with is essential.
3. Actively monitor local village chiefs, community development associations, city councilors, and local government heads to ensure they are advancing civil defense preparations, and watch for any deliberate attempts to obstruct civil defense drills or organizations.
4. Engage in outdoor activities such as camping during peacetime to cultivate adaptability to diverse environments.
5. Take walks after meals, alone or with children, to locate air raid shelters or evacuation facilities near your home and familiarize yourself with the routes.



### 3.2 Actions Civil Society Can Take

#### 1. Cross-Community Collaboration to Build Trust and Prevent Polarization

Civil society—especially progressive organizations focused on human rights, gender, and democracy—should work to prevent discussions of these issues from becoming polarized. They should establish cross-disciplinary cooperation mechanisms and exchange platforms to build trust. Even when positions differ on specific issues, the priority should remain on presenting the complexity of the issue, engaging in rational discussion, and respecting differences, rather than allowing public discourse to devolve into emotional attacks that obscure the substantive questions at stake.

At the same time, such organizations should establish connections with civil society groups focused on different issues and with information warfare research groups to create a regular platform for information sharing and collaboration. This will strengthen the capacity of gender and human rights groups to observe, analyze, and counter China's information manipulation with greater breadth, sensitivity, and expertise. Through these cross-sector links, they can collectively respond to information manipulation and alert one another.

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Regarding communication, these groups can actively seek dialogue channels beyond their existing networks, such as connecting through non-traditional settings like community colleges, local bookstores, and long-term care facilities. Furthermore, they should advocate for media literacy education to be updated and to incorporate content addressing new forms of information manipulation.

## **2. Gender Organizations' Role in Detecting Chinese Information Manipulation**

Participants also observed that research into Chinese information manipulation tends to concentrate on politics, diplomacy, national defense, and cybersecurity. However, gender organizations—which regularly engage with gender-related and caregiving issues—are able to detect unusual rhetoric or signs of conflict escalation in the areas they monitor. Their gender lens allows them to identify manipulation across a broader range of topics than traditional information warfare research typically covers.

## **3. Active Engagement in International Networks**

The international connections established by individual civil society organizations are vital channels for communicating Taiwan's situation abroad and securing support during wartime. The development and maintenance of these connections is therefore essential for civil society groups.

## **4. Thematic Resilience Programs and Community Support Networks**

Civil society organizations can design guidance protocols for evacuation and wartime response, as well as training courses for professional service



personnel, tailored to the needs of their specific communities or service recipients—such as persons with disabilities, LGBTIQ+ communities, people with chronic illnesses, people experiencing homelessness, migrant workers, or workers in specific occupations. Beyond geographically defined community networks, organizations can also leverage their capabilities to provide methods, tools, and platforms that encourage and assist in establishing "thematic" support communities, enabling groups with shared needs to organize themselves more effectively. For example, an organization might connect parent groups within a region to form a shared network for childcare and essential supplies such as diapers and formula, or link communities of people with chronic illnesses to pre-plan access to medication and coordinate shared emergency medical transport.

## 5. Promote Organizational Resilience and Civil Defense Drills

Civil society organizations—including non-profit organizations, companies, and community groups—should consult with experts in civil defense and disaster response to initiate contingency planning as part of their core organizational development. They should proactively formulate business continuity and operational disruption response plans covering areas such as information security, backup communication systems (e.g., radio), financial stability measures, emergency contact protocols for the populations they serve, and mental health support programs for frontline workers. Furthermore, they should use realistic scenarios (e.g., power/internet outages or critical infrastructure disruptions) to identify and plan for potential problems.

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## **6. Increase Visibility of Successful Community Civil Defense Models**

Participants mentioned that communities—or village chiefs and residents—that have established community-based civil defense organizations should actively promote their efforts. For instance, they could invite journalists for interviews or organize press conferences with other similar communities. This would demonstrate to the public that community civil defense models are feasible and provide concrete evidence that citizens can use to persuade village chiefs or local government leaders who are reluctant to act due to their political stances.

## **7. Strengthen Democratic Defense Through Values-Based Discourse**

In the face of external threats, civil society should actively develop and strengthen the discourse on democratic defense, emphasizing that safeguarding gender equality and human rights is complementary to national security. It should highlight that deepening Taiwan's democracy and enhancing human rights protections are effective ways to strengthen national security.

At the same time, civil society must engage seriously with the realities of authoritarian rule in countries like China and present concrete distinctions between democracy and autocracy to counter narratives about the "futility of democracy" and other defeatist messaging. More importantly, when responding to national security challenges, the fundamental principles of procedural justice and human rights within the democratic system must be protected all the more resolutely. These principles not only distinguish Taiwan from its adversaries, but also serve as the cornerstone for sustaining social trust and resilience.



### 3.3 Actions the Government Can Take

#### 1. Framing Civil Defense from a Whole-of-Society Perspective and Institutionalizing Diverse Representation

When the government engages the public in discussions on civil defense, it should frame the dialogue from the perspective of a diverse society. Avoiding an exclusively national defense framing will make it easier for women and other social groups to participate, leading to more comprehensive policies. The government's current approach of implementing civil defense policy through a whole-of-society resilience framework is on the right track. However, the building blocks and practical implementation of these policies still lean heavily toward infrastructure and emergency response during disasters. More work is needed to address the needs of women and other social groups and to incorporate them into mobilization efforts.

Of course, national defense remains a central pillar of defense policy. It is therefore essential to expand women's and gender-diverse individuals' participation in decision-making, career advancement opportunities, and equitable treatment within the defense sector. This means transforming the male-dominated culture and recognizing the capabilities and contributions of women and gender-diverse personnel. At the same time, the military must enhance education and awareness of gender diversity to ensure that past negative experiences (such as during conscription) do not discourage gender-diverse individuals from engaging in civil or national defense discussions and activities.

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Furthermore, greater attention must be paid to the diversity of backgrounds in the composition of decision-making bodies for whole-of-society resilience, and those involved in decision-making should be knowledgeable about and sensitive to gender and human rights. Decision-makers should include more women, LGBTIQ+ individuals, persons with disabilities, members of different ethnic groups, representatives from the long-term care and childcare fields, or others who can speak to the needs of various social groups.

A closer look at the five main pillars of the Whole-of-Society Resilience Committee, a committee established by Taiwan's Presidential Office in 2024, reveals that several key areas lack a directly corresponding pillar. These include the needs of women and gender-diverse individuals, but also the needs of schools and children, persons with disabilities, and psychological resilience.<sup>11</sup> This reflects a missing dimension in the current composition of the Whole-of-Society Resilience Committee: Taiwan has an abundance of "womanpower" on civil defense issues, but the pathways for women to participate and contribute to decision-making within the existing civil defense system remain unclear. The Ministry of the Interior's collaboration with the Taiwan Homemakers United Consumers Co-op this year (2025) to hold ten Disaster Relief Volunteer Training courses throughout Taiwan focused on women and community cooperation is a commendable start. However, pathways for women's participation—for instance, in forming

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<sup>11</sup> The five pillars include civilian force training and utilization; strategic material preparation and critical supply distribution; energy and critical infrastructure operations and maintenance; social welfare, medical care, and evacuation facility readiness; and information, transportation, and financial network protection.



community-based civil defense volunteer groups or in shaping national civil defense policy—remain unclear.

Finally, the government should, during peacetime, research, develop, and institutionalize support systems and training for workplaces where women constitute the majority of employees, as well as for women in communities. This is necessary to prepare for a scenario in which conflict escalates, most men are conscripted, and women must largely shoulder the responsibilities of family, daily survival in communities, and caregiving.

## **2. Infrastructure Review, Public Information, and Local Government Oversight**

Many participants pointed out during discussions that the quality of existing civil defense infrastructure is inconsistent, particularly the most fundamental elements: air raid shelters and evacuation shelters. For air raid shelters, the government should supervise local authorities to address peeling signage and clearly inventory shelter locations, ensuring that all suitable locations are properly marked. Public outreach should be strengthened, with clear communication that underground spaces in residential buildings—including basement floors with controlled access or apartment basements currently in use—cannot legally refuse entry to the public seeking refuge. For rural areas with insufficient underground shelter space, the central government should coordinate with local governments to survey and develop alternative solutions. For evacuation shelters, efforts should be made to swiftly reinforce water, power, and ventilation systems and ensure they are regularly inspected and maintained.

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Furthermore, a mechanism should be established for reporting and addressing cases of radio signals being overridden by Chinese broadcasts. Local governments should also be supervised to regularly inspect broadcasting systems at the village level.

## **3. Diversity and Inclusion in Civil Defense Infrastructure**

- (1) In addition to continuously inventorying the number of shelters, the government should require that designated air raid shelters be properly maintained, kept clear, and remain accessible. Furthermore, the government should develop and implement Management Guidelines for Evacuation Shelters, providing specific, feasible guidance that includes gender-inclusive restrooms, privacy protection, accessibility features, and security management as necessary standards to ensure the equal safety of all citizens.
- (2) Disaster preparedness plans at all levels of government should explicitly include specialized supplies in their readiness checklists. These include menstrual products, infant formula, adult diapers, and medications for chronic conditions and hormone therapies.

## **4. Ration Allocation Systems and Their Public Outreach**

Distribution planning must be more flexible, with methods beyond household registration, in order to safeguard the rights of non-traditional families and renters. The government must vigorously promote transparency in the distribution of goods and supervise local politicians and village chiefs in their administration of these efforts.



## 5. Policy Tools to Address Political Barriers at the Local Level

Many participants worry about (or have actually experienced) local governments and village chiefs being unwilling to cooperate due to their political leanings, or have found that local governments lack sufficient resources. They proposed that the government develop policy tools that can effectively supervise and incentivize action, such as providing project-specific subsidies for communities to develop and implement civil defense plans.

Furthermore, participants suggested that the government could utilize resources and regulations to integrate civil defense education into various aspects of daily learning and routine settings to fill existing gaps. For example, relevant education and training subsidized or directly administered by the government, such as in-service training for long-term care personnel, could require at least one annual civil defense lecture and drill specifically for long-term care workers and the elderly in their care. Alternatively, civil defense knowledge informed by a gender perspective could be integrated into the Ministry of Education's gender equity education website. This approach would not only facilitate the accumulation of practical experience and lead to the development of consistent, publicly accessible review mechanisms, but it would also address cases where implementers are unwilling to cooperate due to political leanings, while simultaneously mitigating other factors that lead to inconsistent execution, such as insufficient expertise or corruption.

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## **6. Centralized Platforms for Information Equity**

The government should establish a centralized, national-level platform and corresponding channels and mechanisms to ensure every citizen can access information about civil defense, as a part of the strategic infrastructure of the whole-of-society defense plan. The information provided through this platform must be accessible and actionable at every level of government (from central to local administrations) and across different geographic regions (including metropolitan areas, remote areas, and outlying islands). To achieve this, civil defense guidelines should be provided with multilingual support (including Southeast Asian languages), easy-read versions, sign language interpretation, braille, and audio formats that meet the diverse needs of Taiwan's society and ensure equitable access to information.

## **7. Differentiated Civil Defense Drills and Scenario-Based Civil Defense Guidelines**

Participants noted that while they understand the government's concern that providing scenario-based information might cause panic, the public still needs a general idea of what a potential conflict would look like. This includes, for example, which institutions might be targeted first, the extent to which normal societal functions might be disrupted, how to identify the uniforms or weapons of Taiwan's forces versus enemy forces, and basic military knowledge. Participants also suggested looking to Ukraine's experience to understand how daily life continued during wartime.



If the government provides more practical, scenario-based drills and civil defense guidelines targeted at different groups for escalating conflict situations—for example, outlining the specific situations and impacts that various industries or communities would face during a conflict—it would better help the public prepare in advance and build psychological resilience. Participants also mentioned that Taiwan's emergency drills have historically focused on individuals, lacking scenarios that involve organizations and contexts such as families, companies, or schools. The government could use incentives (providing instructors, guidance, support, and rewards) to encourage these groups to conduct their own drills, or could select different types of organizations across various regions as pilot programs.

## 8. Empowering Agencies Responsible for Children's Affairs and Schools

Participants raised several concerns: the lack of pre-crisis civil defense guidelines and education from preschool to university, the absence of pre-training and guaranteed rights protection for children and youth during wartime, and China's attempts to influence parents and students through information manipulation on platforms like TikTok. To address these issues, the government must grant clear roles to schools and children's affairs agencies, such as the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health and Welfare, within the civil defense decision-making framework (e.g., the Whole-of-Society Resilience Committee). This would not only affirm that these institutions are part of overall social resilience, but also safeguard children's and youth's rights to safety, information, and expression.

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### **9. Establishing a Whole-of-Society Psychological Resilience Support System**

The government should propose concrete policies, support, and incentives for civil society organizations to develop psychological resilience guidelines and family communication resources for various groups (such as children, adolescents, and the elderly), helping the public cope with psychological stress under uncertainty. Additionally, psychological support services and self-care guidelines should be formally integrated into the civil defense system and included in the Management Guidelines for Evacuation Shelters. Relevant professionals should also be empowered to become trainers for psychological first aid during disasters.

### **10. Supporting Essential Workers to Maintain Core Societal Functions**

Response guidelines should be formulated for each of the following: public, publicly-owned/privately-operated, and government-contracted childcare, long-term care, and social welfare services. These guidelines should include, at minimum, ensuring the safety of personnel and information, evacuation standards, supply reserves, communication plans with those receiving services, and plans for transitioning from peacetime to wartime operations.

The government should also collaborate with local authorities and relevant civil society organizations to inventory the essential personnel required to sustain daily social operations during emergencies. This includes frontline medical workers, social welfare personnel, childcare and long-term care workers, and those maintaining critical infrastructure. Their physical and



mental well-being, as well as family support needs, should be incorporated into contingency planning to ensure that they can perform their duties without undue concern, thereby safeguarding the stability of society's core functions in times of crisis.

## 11. Establishing Defense Mechanisms to Prevent Human Rights Violations

- (1) Participants recommended emulating the model of the Central Epidemic Command Center (CECC) during Covid-19 to establish a Social Resilience Communication Task Force. This task force should be supervised at the Executive Yuan level, integrate various government agencies, and include representatives from civil society. The core mission of this body should not be merely to debunk disinformation but to communicate about contested issues. In the early stages of information manipulation, it should proactively and promptly provide clear, evidence-based information to maintain social trust.
- (2) The government should pre-emptively establish clear human rights protection mechanisms and response measures for foreign nationals residing in Taiwan (especially Chinese nationals) and for communities on the outlying islands during wartime. This should include procedures for identity verification and protection protocols, as well as effective public communication channels to prevent witch hunts involving discrimination, violence, and injustice based on nationality, ethnicity, or region. This step is not only a humanitarian measure but also crucial for national security, maintaining social stability, and avoiding enemy attempts to sow division.

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## **12. Addressing Social Controversies to Counter Information Manipulation**

The government should actively identify and address all potential and unresolved public conflicts and controversies, recognizing them as critical to both national security and social trust. It must provide concrete, structured policy measures and clear explanations to the public. Pre-existing social conflicts and public controversies can become vulnerabilities that external forces exploit to manipulate information, distract public attention, and erode social trust. This is especially true when resource allocation is inequitable or insufficient, leading to situations where vulnerable groups are pitted against each other and controversies are maliciously amplified and distorted, further tearing apart communities and undermining social trust. For instance, the question of how to establish gender-inclusive restrooms, particularly for transgender citizens, has triggered heated public debate in Taiwan. In this case, the government should, for example, introduce legislative amendments and guidelines and allocate sufficient resources for retrofitting construction to ensure the widespread establishment of public restrooms that are safe, privacy-conscious, and inclusive of all groups regardless of gender. By doing so, it can prevent inappropriate spatial layouts and safety concerns from becoming sources of social controversy that the PRC could leverage.

## **13. Recognizing Civil Society as a Core Partner in Defense Resilience**

### **(1) Formalize Government-Civil Society Collaboration in Emergency Response**

The UN CEDAW Committee's General Recommendation No. 40 (GR 40) explicitly states that States parties should ensure women's organizations



are granted full, equal, and meaningful participation in all decision-making mechanisms related to building social resilience, peace, and security. We call on the government to uphold this principle and extend it to encompass a broader range of communities. A formal, ongoing collaboration mechanism between the government and civil society for emergency response should be established. Representatives from civil society organizations focused on the rights of women, gender-diverse individuals, persons with disabilities, migrant workers and immigrants, Indigenous peoples, laborers, and caregivers should be formally integrated into the planning, execution, and evaluation of disaster relief and civil defense drills at all levels of government, ensuring that policies respond to genuine, diverse needs.

#### (2) Assist Civil Society Organizations in Building International Connections

Many international organizations have extensive experience with conflict, large-scale disasters, gender equality, and intersectional issues. The government can facilitate exchange and learning between Taiwanese civil society organizations and these international bodies, thereby developing a broader and more robust form of civic diplomacy.

#### (3) Expand Opportunities for Collaboration Between Citizens and Government

While the government plays a critical role in civil defense affairs, the public should and can also contribute. Collaboration between the government and the people is more efficient and reduces oversights. Based on participants' insights, the following are concrete directions

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through which such cooperation could be advanced:

a. **Platform to Report Damage to Civil Defense Infrastructure**

Many participants noted that damaged or unusable civil defense infrastructure often goes unnoticed unless there happens to be a drill or someone stumbles upon the problem. Discovering such damage only in wartime would have dire consequences. To prevent this, the government could establish an online reporting platform that allows concerned citizens to promptly report any damage or malfunction in civil defense facilities. This would enable the government to assess the situation early and respond more effectively.

b. **Collaborative Development of Taiwan's Safety Guide**

In 2025, the government published *In Case of Crisis: Taiwan's National Public Safety Guide*. Though this publication is more accessible and relevant to the public than previous guides, many participants noted that they need guidance tailored to their specific circumstances and contexts.

Given that government resources are limited, it is difficult for the government alone to understand the needs of every community. The government could therefore consider implementing a civic collaboration mechanism or shared contribution platform for this guide, making a guide template available, and setting clear copyright licensing policies. This would allow various groups and communities

to use it as a foundation for developing manuals that address their own needs—for example, preschool teachers, parents, office workers, company executives, the LGBTIQ+ community, disability groups, women's organizations, and residents from different regions. These groups could also be encouraged to share their adaptations with the government and other groups for joint verification and refinement, which would also help further promote the guide.

However, before any such measures can be taken, the government must first clearly communicate the guide's copyright terms. At the bottom of the guide's official webpage,<sup>12</sup> the copyright notice states, "© 2025 All-out Defense Mobilization Agency, Ministry of National Defense. All rights reserved," but a conflicting statement is then listed under the Privacy Policy, Open Government Data Declaration, and Security Policy section on the Guide's website, which states,

all data and materials published on 'Taiwan's National Public Safety Guide' falls under the Open Government Data License, Version 1.0, which allows the public to use the material free of charge, on a non-exclusive basis, and with sublicensing rights. Users may reproduce, adapt, edit, publicly transmit, or otherwise utilize the material—developing derivative products or services—without time or territorial restrictions. This authorization is irrevocable and does not require additional written permission from the agency, provided that proper attribution is given.

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Taken together, the presence of conflicting copyright and licensing statements creates ambiguity regarding the permissible scope of reuse and adaptation. Clarifying and unifying this framework is therefore a necessary precondition for enabling lawful civic participation and co-production.

## **c. Public Sharing of Community-Organized Emergency Drill Experiences**

Many participants expressed willingness to voluntarily conduct scenario-based drills within their non-profit organizations, preschools, families, or companies. The government should proactively contact them to facilitate the exchange of experiences. Additionally, the government should establish and maintain a platform to collect these experiences and practices and share them publicly. This platform for experience exchange would allow civil defense practices to develop differentiated applications based on the needs of different regions and groups, thereby encouraging broader participation.

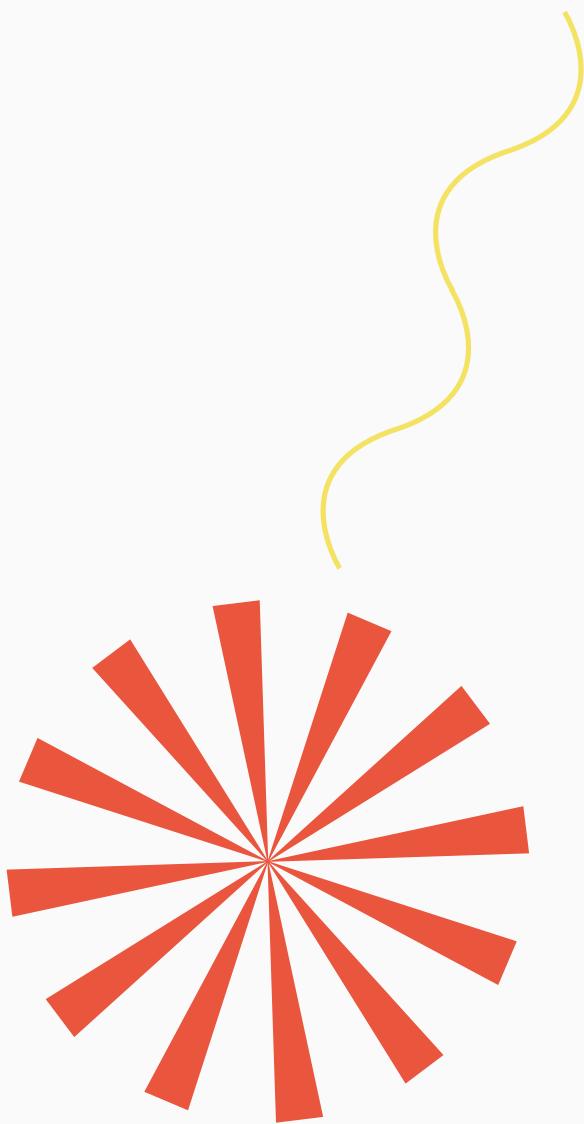
## **14. Building on Taiwan's Past Successes in Epidemic Control and Disaster Relief**

Many participants also mentioned that the Taiwanese government established many effective practices in response to Covid-19. These included using clear, accessible infographics to counter false information, reporting the latest

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12 <https://prepare.mnd.gov.tw>

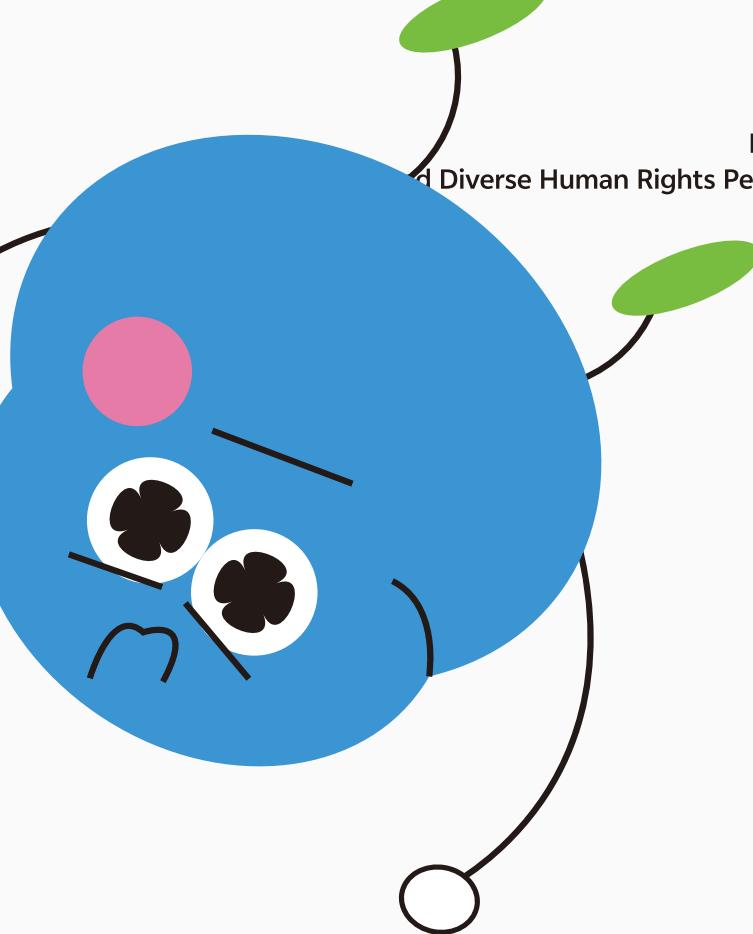
developments to the public through daily press conferences, and quickly addressing misunderstandings from all sides. They hope that the government, in executing civil defense policy, will adopt the same mechanisms for timely, clear, and transparent information provision and feedback that can reach various sectors of Taiwanese society.



## **Chapter IV.** **Limitations** **and Recommendations**

The needs, challenges, and policy solutions outlined in this white paper were drawn from the discussions of two workshops involving representatives from more than thirty civil society organizations. While the preparation and deliberation processes sought to incorporate as many diverse perspectives and insights as possible, certain limitations and gaps remain. Examples include the following:

1. Because most participants were based in urban areas, there was limited discussion of how elderly populations concentrated in rural regions could receive evacuation information or locate shelters in real time. In scenarios such as a blockade of Taiwan's surrounding waters that disrupts energy imports, gasoline shortages could pose severe challenges for remote communities that rely heavily on private vehicles for access to essential supplies, medical care, and education. Moreover, since few participants were residents of Indigenous regions, the report offers only a preliminary understanding of the unique needs of Indigenous communities.
2. Also, due to the constraints in the background and experience of the participating organizations, there was not a more detailed or comprehensive discussion on the needs and potential difficulties faced by different groups of laborers, migrant workers, and persons experiencing homelessness in a conflict scenario.



3. Furthermore, there were no participants from the outlying islands (such as Kinmen and Matsu). Residents of Kinmen, Matsu, and Taiwan proper have long had different experiences and perspectives regarding the threat from China, differences that could become an opening for those seeking to manipulate information. Should tensions escalate, how to ensure the continuous supply of daily necessities for island residents, including food, water, electricity, and internet access, still requires discussion. If evacuation becomes necessary, the conditions and methods for evacuation, as well as how to safeguard the rights of outlying island residents during the process, also remain to be addressed.

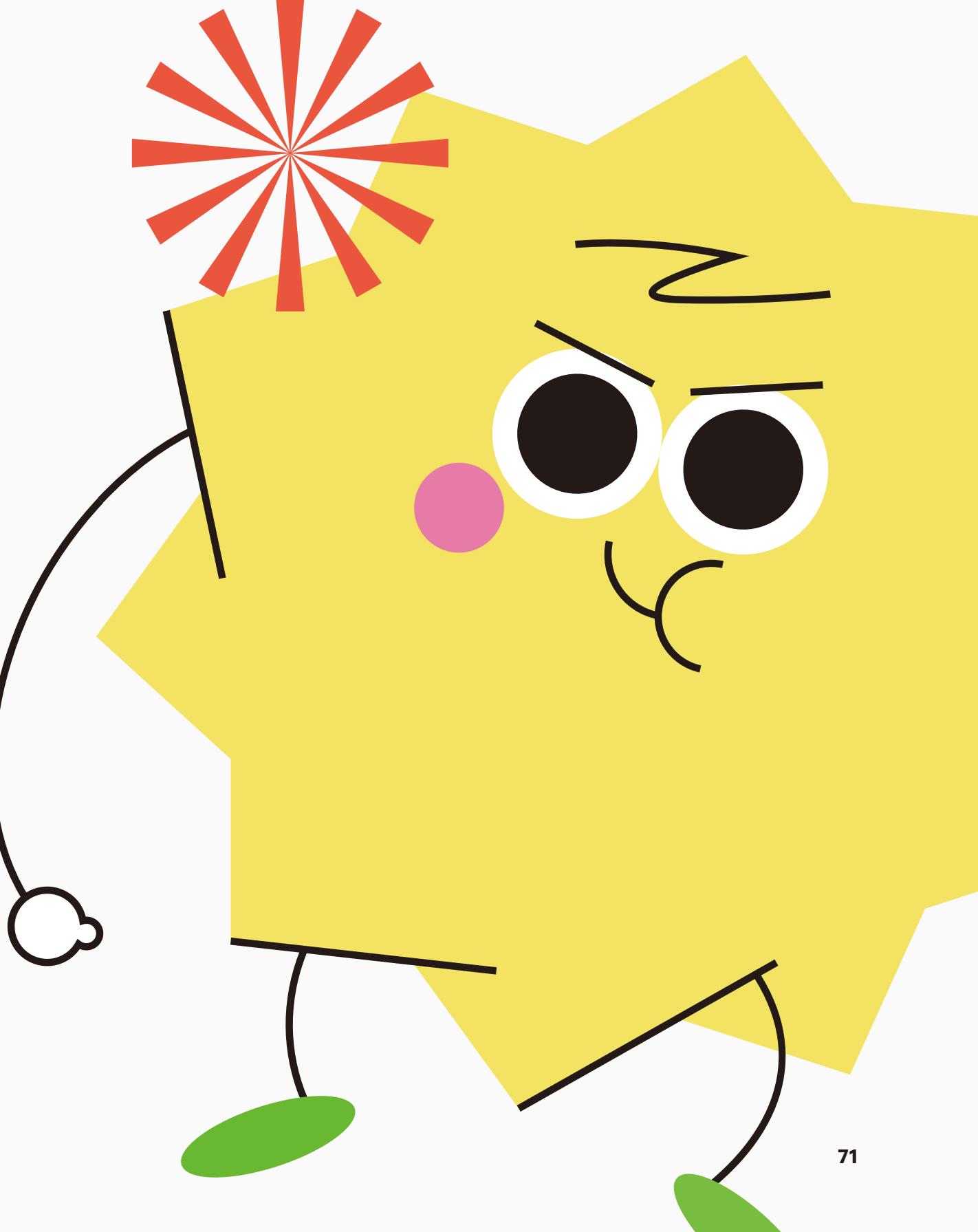
## **Building a Resilient and Inclusive Whole-of-Society Defense**

### **Chapter V. Conclusion**

Taiwan's government has already drawn up an important overarching blueprint for whole-of-society defense. The purpose of this white paper is to emphasize that a truly resilient democratic society requires not only top-down institution-building but also bottom-up, nuanced care rooted in the authentic circumstances of the people. Integrating gender and diverse human rights perspectives into whole-of-society defense goes beyond rhetoric; it is a strategic necessity critical to Taiwan's survival.

The choice facing policymakers is not a trade-off between social welfare and national security. Rather, they must recognize that a society which values equity and human rights is inherently harder to defeat. Investment in social diversity and inclusion today is the foundation of social stability in tomorrow's crises. This white paper brings together the collective wisdom of the dialogues held throughout this process, serving as an important supplement to existing policies and as a reference for policymakers and civil society partners both in Taiwan and abroad. However, this document does not claim to encompass all necessary or urgent topics for discussion. Continued expansion of participation through consultation, dialogue, and research remains essential. It is our hope that this paper will serve as a catalyst for broader, ongoing discussion, action, and collaboration in the years to come.

Policy Recommendations for Integrating  
Gender and Diverse Human Rights Perspectives into Taiwan's Social Resilience



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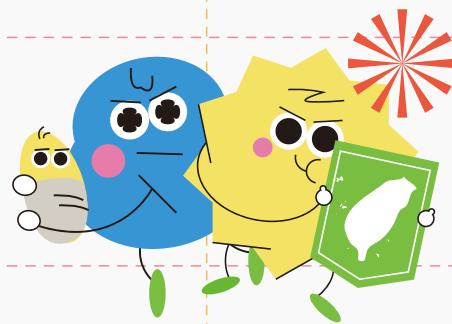
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