

FANG TINGJUN  
Co-founder,  
The Chain  
Reaction Project

## LET'S TALK ABOUT THE SEXES

GENDER EQUALITY APPLIES TO  
MEN AS WELL.

The term "inequality" refers to the existence of a prejudice that gives one party more benefits over another. But, while Fang Tingjun agrees that gender inequality at the workplace is still a nagging problem worldwide, she contends that this prohibitive social construct is unfair to everyone, and does not exclusively give men the upper hand.

To her, the key to tackling gender inequality is not so much for society to view women as equal to their male counterparts, but more of a need for an objective assessment of one's abilities.

"If a woman can be a much more successful breadwinner, while her husband has all the traits of being a great father and homemaker, is that then wrong? Gender equality works both ways," says Fang, a co-founder of The Chain Reaction Project, a non-profit organisation with a focus on women and children. She is also the Singapore spokesman for Pantene's global #Shine Strong campaign, which released a much-lauded advertisement last year portraying gender bias at the workplace.

The statistics for first-world nations like Singapore would raise a few eyebrows. The World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Report last year ranked the city-state 58th in the world, behind the likes of Sri Lanka and Mongolia. The Singapore Board Diversity Report 2013 revealed that only 7.9 per cent of board directors here are women.

And, even though the world is beginning to see more women in power, like Yahoo! CEO Marissa Mayer and Facebook COO Sheryl Sandberg, Fang believes that more still needs to be done to level the playing field. She enthused about how many countries could take a leaf out of Sweden's book – newly minted dads there are entitled to 480 days of paid paternal leave.

But, apart from government policies and stereotypes pertaining to traditional gender roles, Fang argues that women ultimately need to take ownership of their destinies.

"The glass ceiling is there and, yes, it's imposed by society," she says. "But, sometimes, this barrier is created by women themselves. They need to step up and realise that it is made of glass. It is breakable." ☯

