

# Gender in Development

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*Prisma Paper on Gender –  
A contribution to reflection and policy*



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*This paper is meant as a contribution of the Prisma staff office to reflection and policy making of Prisma members and their partners and all other interested organisations.*

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## Abbreviations

BPA	Beijing Platform for Action
CDWAC	Community Development Women Affairs and Children
CEDAW	Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women
CSW	Commission on the Status of Women
ILO	International Labour Organization
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
UN	United Nations
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund

# 1 THE AIM OF PRISMA'S VISION PAPER

## 1.1 Introduction

Prisma<sup>1</sup> is committed to the poor and to challenging injustice. One important approach to the issues of poverty and justice is gender, as will be argued below. Gender refers to the roles, behaviour, activities and attributes that a particular society considers appropriate for men and women. It refers to the social attributes and opportunities associated with being male or female, the relationships between women and men and girls and boys, as well as the relations among women and those among men. The distinct roles and behaviour may give rise to gender inequalities, i.e. differences between men and women that systematically favour one group.

According to statistics, empowering women and erasing gender inequities within societies is far from being achieved.<sup>2</sup> Prisma believes it has an important contribution to make in the gender debate as together with its members and their partners it works towards the common Christian development goal of shalom and justice.

Prisma is a member of the ICCO Cooperation.<sup>3</sup> This means that programmes financed by commonly raised funds are realized in cooperation with the other members of the cooperation and with the ICCO organization. A new gender policy entitled 'Unlearning gender' was presented in 2011.<sup>4</sup> Its focus is on ways of 'unlearning' and modifying issues related to gender inequality in an attempt to promote practices of equal opportunities and rights for both women and men, especially in education and economic development. The ICCO Cooperation gender policy describes the common goal of contributing to gender equality and women's empowerment and the strategy to achieve this goal.

Within the ICCO Cooperation Prisma<sup>5</sup> has committed itself to the practical implications of working on gender as described in the alliance document. However, as an association of Christian organisations mostly working together with faith-based organisations (FBO's), churches and Christian leaders Prisma feels the need to relate its vision on gender policy explicitly with its Christian world view. The aim of this Prisma vision paper is, therefore, to formulate a Christian view on gender as a dimension of humanity, and its implications for gender-related inequalities and injustices. In writing this paper we have used input of members in earlier consultations on SRHR. At the same time this paper does not pretend to be a consensus document of the Prisma members and their partners. It is primarily a vision as formulated by Prisma staff, in which their knowledge of the subject and experience with the work of members and partners in this field constituted an important resource. This paper aims to give an account of the view

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<sup>1</sup> Where we mention Prisma in this paper we not just refer to the staff and office but in a general sense also to members of the Association and their partners.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing15/index.html>

<sup>3</sup> In fact a sister association of Prisma, called coPrisma is member of ICCO Cooperation; most members of Prisma are also members of coPrisma, some are not. For practical reasons we will just mention Prisma in this paper.

<sup>4</sup> 'Unlearning gender' see <http://www.icco.eu/en/publications-downloads&action=details&c=publicaties&index=179>

<sup>5</sup> In fact this applies to coPrisma.

from which the Prisma has been working on this issue, as well as to serve our members and their partners in the formulation and explanation of their strategies without intending to be prescriptive. This paper is seen as an addition, not a contrast, to the ICCO Cooperation position paper on gender.

We realize that the topic of gender includes other gender groups and minorities like homosexual people. However, dealing with those issues here, would be beyond the scope of this paper. For a view on the related topic of sexual and reproductive health and rights, we refer to Prisma's *Pro-Creation: Prisma Vision Paper on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights*<sup>6</sup>.

## **1.2 Structure of the document**

After this introduction we will first briefly sketch the national and international context of the debate on gender in development cooperation. Subsequently in chapter 3 we will briefly refer to positions taken on this issue by churches and Christian organisations. In chapter 4 we come to the core of this paper: a Christian perspective on gender and gender issues. Finally in chapter 5 we list a number of issues and questions related to gender in development cooperation as a help for our members and partners to discuss this matter and, where relevant, integrate it into their programmes.

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<sup>6</sup>[http://www.prismaweb.org/media/50598/prisma%20vision%20paper%20srhr%20\(short%20version\),%20november%202009.pdf](http://www.prismaweb.org/media/50598/prisma%20vision%20paper%20srhr%20(short%20version),%20november%202009.pdf)

## 2 SETTING THE STAGE

### 2.1 International positions

The reflection within Prisma on gender takes place within an international context. Gender issues have drawn the attention of actors in international development for many years because they pertain to substantial problems with respect to equality and justice. In this chapter we will refer to this international context in which Prisma, its members and its partners work.

#### 2.1.1 Main issues

Much is happening at international levels in favour of gender empowerment. Women still bear a disproportionate burden of the world's poverty. They are more likely to be poor and hungry, and carry a burden of violence and systematic inequities. This discrimination can be in the areas of education, health care, employment (low wages, insecure, unsafe<sup>7</sup>) or control of assets. It leaves many without even the basic rights of access to clean drinking water, sanitation, medical care and lower payment than men<sup>8</sup>, with persistent discrimination when applying for credit. It is recognized that women cannot achieve gender equality without the cooperation and participation of men. Men often control access to information and services, finances, transportation and other resources. As policy makers, religious or community leaders, heads of armies and other agencies of force, or as husbands and fathers, men often wield enormous power over many aspects of women's lives.

Since the *Beijing Declaration, The Commission on the Status of Women* called for taking strategic action in twelve critical areas of concern of women's issues worldwide (See Table 1<sup>9</sup>).

**Table 1. Beijing 1995, woman issues worldwide. Critical areas of concern**

<b>1. The persistent and increasing burden of poverty on women</b>
<b>2. Inequalities and inadequacies in and unequal access to education and training<sup>10</sup></b>
<b>3. Inequalities and inadequacies in and unequal access to health care and related services</b>
<b>4. Violence against women</b>
<b>5. The effects of armed or other kinds of conflict on women, including those living under foreign occupation</b>
<b>6. Inequality in economic structures and policies, in all forms of productive activities and in access to resources</b>
<b>7. Inequality between men and women in the sharing of power and decision-making at all levels</b>
<b>8. Insufficient mechanisms at all levels to promote the advancement of women</b>
<b>9. Lack of respect for and inadequate promotion and protection of the human rights of women</b>
<b>10. Stereotyping of women and inequality in women's access to and participation in all communication systems, especially in the media</b>
<b>11. Gender inequalities in the management of natural resources and in the safeguarding of the environment</b>
<b>12. Persistent discrimination against and violation of the rights of the girl child</b>

<sup>7</sup> Eight out of 10 female workers are considered to be in vulnerable employment in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia

<sup>8</sup> Average wage gap in 2008 of 17 percent. Ref?

<sup>9</sup><http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/plat1.htm#statement>

<sup>10</sup><http://www.wvi.org/wvi/wviweb.nsf/webmaindocs/5804DE3B01206059882577D80074ED88?OpenDocument>

These main issues of concern are adapted from the Beijing platform (§44)<sup>11</sup> and the UNFPA's *Healthy Expectations*.<sup>12</sup> All of them include strategies of the UN's 'platform for action' on the topic. These have valuable information on each; from diagnosis to possible actions to be taken and how to assess its developments.<sup>13</sup> Although most countries worldwide have addressed these issues for the promotion of gender equality through many institutional mechanisms, not many of the strategies allowed societies to improve in these areas on their own cultural traditions. Many attempts to fully integrate women in development activities failed to realize the necessary economic or political changes.<sup>14</sup>

### 2.1.2 International context

In development cooperation the discourse around gender has become a prevalent topic. A number of international organisations are working and have issued statements on this subject. Here we mention the most important ones; for more information see Annex 1.

The *International Labour Organization* estimates that in 2009 the economic downturn could lead to 22 million more unemployed women. This would jeopardize the gains made in the latest few decades in women's empowerment.<sup>15</sup> Economic policies and institutions, including tax and budget systems and trade regimes still mostly fail to take gender disparities into account. Moreover, with too few seats at the tables where economic decisions are made, women themselves have limited opportunity to influence policy.<sup>16</sup>

Since 1979, the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* (CEDAW)<sup>17</sup>, was established by the UN General Assembly. It defined what constitutes discrimination against women and sets up an agenda for national action to end such discrimination. In July 2010, the United Nations General Assembly created *UN Women*<sup>18</sup>, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women.

Another entity is the *Commission on the Status of Women* (CSW)<sup>19</sup>, the principal global policy-making body dedicated exclusively to gender equality and advancement of women. The UN Women<sup>20</sup> has been responsible for organizing and following up world conferences on women. In Beijing (1995) twelve

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<sup>11</sup><http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/plat1.htm#concern>

<sup>12</sup><http://www.prb.org/pdf09/unfpa-chartbook.pdf>

<sup>13</sup><http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/index.html>

<sup>14</sup>Northern, D. (xx). Gender Issues. Electronic Publications from St. Augustine University of Tanzania, Mwanza <http://www.fiuc.org/esap/MWANZ/MWANZ8/General/Northern.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> For women, the impact is far beyond the loss of formal jobs, as the majority of them tend to work in the informal sector, for example as domestics in cities, and do not show up in official unemployment numbers (UNIFEM).

<sup>16</sup>[http://www.unifem.org/gender\\_issues/women\\_poverty\\_economics/](http://www.unifem.org/gender_issues/women_poverty_economics/)

<sup>17</sup> Often described as an international bill of rights for women. CEDAW - <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/> and <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/index.html>

<sup>18</sup> UN Women - <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/daw/index.html>

<sup>19</sup> CSW - <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/index.html>

<sup>20</sup><http://www.unwomen.org/>

critical areas of concern were identified<sup>21</sup> (cf. above) and action-oriented recommendations adopted in the form of agreed conclusions to facilitate increased implementation at all levels. Over the past decade, the Commission has systematically reviewed progress in implementation.<sup>22</sup> According to Kofi Annan, the former General Secretary of the UN, “Gender equality is more than a goal in itself. It is a precondition for meeting the challenge of reducing poverty, promoting sustainable development and building good governance.”

The World Development Report 2012<sup>23</sup> also states that from an economic perspective investing in women and girls is a strong strategy. ‘If women and girls were given access to all tiers of education, land rights, more opportunities to enter the job market, and more control over their lives - particularly in respect of family planning - overall development prospects would improve for all’.

## 2.2 Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs

With regards to gender issues, the Netherlands promotes the position of women in its bilateral and multilateral cooperation and through support for relevant NGOs. The Netherlands promotes gender mainstreaming and offers credible poverty reduction strategies such as microcredit programmes available to women.<sup>24</sup>

In its most recent gender policy document<sup>25</sup>, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs stresses a twin track approach, meaning that the government promotes gender equality and empowerment of women along two mutually reinforcing tracks. The first track is an independent, overarching international gender policy with four priorities: leadership and political power of women, follow-up of the UNSC Resolution 1325 on women and peace and security, economic empowerment of women and the fight against trafficking and violence against women. The second track is systematic gender mainstreaming in the three pillars of foreign policy and in the four priority areas of development cooperation. The basic principle of government is that by promoting gender equality the effectiveness of policies is increased. More than her predecessor, the current Minister for foreign trade and development cooperation, Minister Ploumen, focuses on gender and women rights. In her policy paper ‘A world to gain: a new agenda for aid, trade and investment’, she broadened one of the four policy priorities into SRHR *and women rights*. The Minister is not in favour of mainstreaming gender, but rather focuses on women rights.

About the Post MDG agenda the Minister chose gender equality as one of the four main priorities for the Netherlands. She recognises the importance of women’s contributions to development and is committed towards empowering the position of women at the same time recognising the responsibilities of men.

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<sup>21</sup>Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/declar.htm>

<sup>22</sup><http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/index.html>,

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/daw/index.html>

<sup>23</sup><http://econ.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/EXTDEC/EXTRESEARCH/EXTWDRS/EXTWDR2012/0,,menuPK:7778074~pagePK:7778278~piPK:7778320~theSitePK:7778063~contentMDK:22851055,00.html>

<sup>22</sup> [http://www.euroresources.org/guide/donor\\_profiles/nl\\_netherlands.html](http://www.euroresources.org/guide/donor_profiles/nl_netherlands.html)

<sup>25</sup> <http://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten-en-publicaties/kamerstukken/2011/11/15/kamerbrief-internationaal-genderbeleid.html>

## 2.3 General Reflection

Globalization can be an added risk to gender inequality as

*“...Global integration may reduce the role of the state in the economy, and be associated with reductions in health, education and social welfare expenditures. These changes may put new burdens on women, particularly poor women. Reductions in state expenditure, particularly in the areas of health, education and welfare, often increase the domestic work of maintaining the household and looking after children. These tasks are usually performed by women, who may be forced to work longer hours in order to replace state provision of education and health care. This puts the education and health of children in jeopardy and may put girl children at added risk”.*<sup>26</sup>

Room for manoeuvre, and acceptance of diversity, is essential to restore stability to the global economy, disrupted by the monoculture of liberalization and one-size-fits all thinking. The impact of (post)modern industrialized world on ‘developing’ countries, in which many people to some extent live in a pre-modern cultural setting, should not be underestimated. This impact can easily also be negative. It may initiate to change habitual patterns by which the cultural background will be set in a flow of change and transformation that may disrupt established social patterns without providing an acceptable alternative. Major changes need generations to solidify and in many countries the changes started by modernization have not yet worked out their beneficial expectations. If changes in gender positions go too quickly, e.g. from a patriarchal to a more equal or matriarchal society, it might leave many youth, boys and girls in a state of confusion about their role that could hinder the establishment of stable relationships. It may be worth to make an attempt to address these issues and understand that organic change, slow and moulded into its present pattern of culture maybe more effective than ‘quick’ changes that in themselves seem positive but do not sufficiently take into account the local culture and provokes counterproductive reactions.

The *Declaration of Human Rights*, the *International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo)*<sup>27</sup> and other initiatives of the *UN Women* are primarily addressing a variety of situations and circumstances in which inequality between men and women lead to injustices. Those situations should indeed be addressed and many principles and actions that are proposed can be welcomed. We endorse the efforts assigned in *Human rights and International Conference on Population and Development* and the *Millennium Development Goals* towards a more equitable society. However, we wonder whether the specific framing of the issues and the language used may not be limiting the effectiveness of their intentions. We quote principle 4 of the Programme of Action of the UN ICPD as formulated in Cairo (1994) that specifically deals with gender.

### *Principle 4*

*Advancing gender equality and equity and the empowerment of women, and the elimination of all kinds of violence against women, and ensuring women's ability to control their own fertility, are cornerstones of population and development-related programs. The human rights of women and the girl- child are an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights. The full and equal participation of women in civil, cultural, economic, political, and social life, at the national,*

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<sup>26</sup> UC Atlas of Global mortality: gender bias and mortality [http://ucatlas.ucsc.edu/gender/gender\\_mortality.php](http://ucatlas.ucsc.edu/gender/gender_mortality.php)

<sup>27</sup> <http://www.iisd.ca/cairo.html>

*regional and international levels, and the eradication of all forms of discrimination on grounds of sex, are priority objectives of the international community.*

As a reaction against situations of injustice and abuse the phrasing of this principle is understandable. But it is utopian and overly radical in its formulation. For example: "...ensuring women's ability to control their own fertility..."; fertility is something of two people, there is no individual fertility in the sense meant here. Why is the male partner excluded from decisions of raising a family? This phrase neglects the reality of sub- or infertility of women or of couples; there are situations beyond our control. Furthermore, does this principle oblige the states to provide all medically possible means to treat infertility whatever possible ethical or financial objections? This is just one example; close analysis of other UN declarations and programmes of action will reveal many of such radical formulations that are not realistic but also betray an ideological stance, namely of a secular western individualistic view of mankind. Such statements fall short of addressing the underlying issues at stake, pertaining to culturally established views and customs. There is an enormous gap between theoretical concepts and its practical applications. In our view this is mainly due to the fact that concepts of conduct and interpretation are issued mainly at the level of the individual rights, overlooking the differences between western paradigms and prevailing views and practices in other cultures.

### 3 VIEWS OF GENDER IN INTERNATIONAL CHRISTIAN CIRCLES

Prisma and Prisma members see themselves as part of worldwide Christianity. We are not the first to reflect on issues like gender. Therefore, before we begin to formulate our view we want to take notice of some voices and positions within the broader context of worldwide Christianity as it has organized itself in different international associations and networks.

#### 3.1 Positions of main actors in Christianity

Among the main actors of the broader Christian debate are the World Council of Churches, the Roman Catholic Church and the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance (EAA). In addition to these organisations some other networks to which Prisma finds itself theologically related, will be mentioned

The *World Council of Churches* (WCC) represents 332 Orthodox, Anglican and a number of major Protestant denominations, with a total membership of about 400 million Christians. Since the inception of the World Council of Churches (WCC) in 1948, the churches have together expressed in many ways their commitment to women and acknowledgement of the role and participation of women in the life of the churches. This position has been based on the affirmation by churches from different traditions that women have equal dignity with men as being created in the image of God, *imago Dei* (Genesis 1:27). With such an affirmation, therefore, women are considered as equal partakers to men in redemption, and as co-workers in God's creation and in the Church's mission.

Among others, in its statement on The International Women's Day of 2009 the WCC invites its member churches to speak out against the continuing manifestations of violence against women and children. It uses its theological and ethical resources as a basis for the rejection of all forms of violence against women and children as a sin and calls on member churches to invest in the building of stable families as a sure source of positive socialization for gender equity and peace for both boys and girls.<sup>28</sup>

The *Roman Catholic Church* has a long tradition of statements on gender, sexuality and procreation, rooted in Roman Catholic theology. The Roman Catholic Church argues that it has developed its view on gender equality in the frame of love. Nevertheless, the RC church has often been attacked on its views and practice of gender equality understood as the recognition of the equal dignity of all human beings. But the RC church maintains its view on the exclusion of women from the ordination to priest (and higher ranks of the clerics). It can be noted that women today exercise many roles in the RC church that they were previously not able to participate in. Still, many people interpret the RC church's position on the ordination of women as a sign that women are not equal to men in the RC church, though it rejects this inference.<sup>29</sup>

It should be noted that also in the Eastern Orthodox Churches and in some Reformed and evangelical circles, certain church offices are not open to women. So this is not just an issue of the RC church. For

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<sup>28</sup> <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/executive-committee/bossey-february-2009/statement-on-the-international-womens-day.html>

<sup>29</sup> Rausch, Thomas P. *Catholicism in the Third Millennium*. Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2003

these churches the view that all human beings are being 'made in the image of God', and hence are equal in status, does not imply that men and women are to be seen as the same in all respects; male and female He made them. In other words, equality in status does not mean sameness in office and function.

The *Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance (EAA)* is an international network of churches and church-related organizations committed to campaigning together on common concerns. Current campaigns focus on HIV&AIDS and Food. EAA's advocacy includes raising awareness and building a movement for justice within the churches as well as mobilizing people of faith to lobby local and national governments, businesses, and multi-lateral organizations. Within their advocacy on HIV&AIDS issues, the gender component is a crucial one as gender inequality and poverty are two important factors that both fuel the HIV and AIDS epidemic and act as structural barriers for improvements within these areas.

Likewise the *Ecumenical HIV and AIDS Initiative in Africa (EHAIA)*, a ministry of the World Council of Churches (WCC), recognizes and promotes the internationally recommended strategy of combating the HIV pandemic through a multi-sector approach which challenges people to interrogate themselves about the pandemic. When dealing with sensitive matters such as sexual and gender-based-violence, incest, gender inequality, sex workers, disempowerment of children and women and harmful cultural practices, EHAIA has adopted contextual bible study methodology on bible texts that are traditionally ignored or omitted as a basis of regular sermons and Christian teachings. Contextual bible study methodology is highly interactive and it creates safe spaces where participants can talk freely about life experiences and their situation in life without compromising their confidentiality.

*Micah Network* is a global community of Christians (NGOs, mission organisations, academic/training institutes, local congregations, networks, alliances, denominational secretariats and individuals) drawn together because of their passion and commitment to justice and integral mission. Established in late 1999 Micah Network now has over 550 members in 80+ countries. Underpinning all activities is the verse from Micah 6:8: "What is good and what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God".

The Micha network<sup>30</sup> has formulated an interim gender policy and is actively discussing gender on one of their forums. This policy is meant primarily for the way the network itself deals with gender. The policy opens with the following statement:

*"As a team we are committed to gender equality which we understand as the Biblical basis for God-ordained partnership between men and women in all spheres of life. We aspire to create a working environment where both genders are supported, encouraged and enabled to fulfil their God-given potential"*

A relatively small organisation but notable in this context for its character and approach is the *Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians*. This network undertakes research and publishes theological literature written by African women with special focus on religion and culture. The Circle challenges its members, and all women, not only to respond to the dearth of theological literature from African

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<sup>30</sup> [http://www.micahnetwork.org/sites/default/files/doc/resources/mn\\_interim\\_gender\\_policy\\_july\\_2001-en.pdf](http://www.micahnetwork.org/sites/default/files/doc/resources/mn_interim_gender_policy_july_2001-en.pdf)

women but also to play a significant role in helping to create and sustain viable communities of women and men in the church and in society in Africa.<sup>31</sup> The Circle members attempt to reflect together on justice across boundaries of gender, faith and belief.

### **3.2 Debates and Reflections**

For many years, churches and Christian organizations have accepted unbiblical gender relations as normal and were unable to sufficiently change the cultural patterns that are contrary to the Bible. On the other hand, in some cases where cultural patterns have changed and became more biblically based, Christians have become resistant to adapt to changes in their cultural context.

We see Christians around the world struggling to move Christian communities – in particular churches and theological institutions – to dismantle patriarchy and sexism by mainstreaming gender discourse and justice in all theological disciplines and church ministries. The rejection of the ordination of women in official offices in the several denominations continues to be a major point of discussion and controversy within and among many religious communities in many of the world's cultures and religions.<sup>32</sup> In our view this issue is a theological and ecclesiastical matter that communities should deal with themselves and need not be on the agenda of NGO's in development cooperation.

At the same time it is clear that in all churches and religious communities people are struggling against dehumanizing structures that render women powerless and as second grade human beings and that maintain practices that are harmful to girls and women. Such situations should be addressed in an open and frank dialogue in view of improving the position of women.

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<sup>31</sup> <http://www.thecirclecawt.org/index.html>

<sup>32</sup> See Messer, D E (2004) *Breaking the conspiracy of silence: Christian churches and the global AIDS crisis*, Fortress Press, Minneapolis, especially chapter 5, where the author discusses the ways that Christianity and other faiths contribute towards oppressive beliefs and practices in patriarchal societies.

## 4 A CHRISTIAN POSITION

### 4.1 Introduction

*'So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them'* (Genesis 1: 27). Both women and men are created in God's image. It is God's creative and redeeming love that gives any human being its fundamental and inalienable dignity. A dignity granted to him/her by the Creator. A dignity that is inalienable and hence independent from gender, position capacity etc. The human being, created in the image of God, is from the start also a relational being. Healthy relationships are the starting point of people's wellbeing. Gender relations are meant to be characterized by mutual respect and equality and by functional diversity.<sup>33</sup>

In this chapter we will present a Christian position on gender that at the same time can function as a framework for the evaluation of the issues related to the field of gender in society. We will present our position with the use of the focal points of salvation history: creation, fall, redemption and restoration as perspectives on reality.<sup>34</sup>

This treatise starts from the presupposition that obedience to God's creational laws also extends to the moral field, in a sense similar to creational laws of physics, such as for example the law of gravity. For the moral field the Ten Commandments are key principles as is Jesus's command to honour one's parents and 'love your neighbour as yourself'.<sup>35</sup> Human beings are accountable to God and their fellow humans. The reading of the Bible and prayer, asking for guidance of the Holy Spirit and the wisdom of counsellors that know the local context, should occur within the church community.

### 4.2 Focal points of salvation history

In salvation history we distinguish four main focal points, viz. creation, fall, redemption, and restoration of the world.<sup>36</sup> The meaning of these main points of salvation history in the first place regards God's saving work in history. But these focal points in the history of salvation can also function as perspectives on human life and the world. This means that all four of them are at the same time relevant for a biblical understanding of life and of issues in life like the gender issue. In this paragraph we will develop these four perspectives as they relate to gender in order to come to a Christian understanding of it.



#### 4.2.1 Creation

The perspective of creation is the perspective of the beginning, of the origin of things. Creation holds that God, the Creator, in His act of creation gave expression of His own character, implying that creation rests on divine purpose and morality. In this way God created humankind: as male and female and in

<sup>33</sup> Ephesians 5:21-33

<sup>34</sup> In the annex we present a second framework for the interested that is derived from Reformational Philosophy.

<sup>35</sup> Mathew 19:19, Romans 13:9

<sup>36</sup> Wolters, AM (1985). Creation regained. Grand Rapids (MI)

God's image, as parts to a whole. Each one alike and different, made for one another; independent of one another, to uphold and cherish, as God does to His creation. However, God also addressed underlying laws of living together, as to keep all in perfect harmony.

Being created in the image of God finds expression in religiosity, relatedness and responsibility in obedience to underlying moral/normative laws.

This perspective on gender underlines the high status of mankind, the equality of male and females as well as their functional difference in the common task to till and keep the earth (Genesis 2: 7, 15, 21).

Gender, respect for each other and sexuality are very closely related. God has given love, sexuality, relationships and marriage as a blessing, to be enjoyed. Healthy family life is important to individual fulfilment, social stability and sustainable development. In this broken world, however, we see that people are very vulnerable in this area. Often these blessings are being abused, leading to unhappiness or problems like sexual violence, (forced) prostitution, teenage pregnancies, single headed households, etc. The fundamental background of these aberrations is the disturbance of the relation with God, theologically called the fall.

#### **4.2.2 Fall**

This perspective teaches that pride, disbelief and disobedience destroyed the harmonious relationship of mankind with God, each other and nature. Hence the fundamental root of evil and suffering is not a lack of knowledge or resources, or just blind fate, but the loss of the sound relationship with God. The fall is expressed in all areas of life; individually and corporately. As if it was a contamination of the pure waters of creation. Fall has affected people, societal institutions and our thinking. It causes distorted relationships. The bible tells us that the relation between Adam and Eve and between them and the rest of creation was distorted due to the distorted relation with God. Accusations and shame started. The suppression of the woman by the man was predicted, not as a command but as a consequence for which man is responsible! (Genesis 3:16). Manifestations of inequality and of oppression between man and woman do not root in creation but in sin, by which human beings increase their guilt.

Since then the underlying created structures and their corruption are inextricably mixed. Therefore, our ethical judgment is a process of learning how to interpret the validity of ethical values in a particular situation. In this journey, we need God's guidance. We realise that in the course of this process, in which many factors can play a role, people may come to different practical conclusions, even if they adhere to the same religion.

#### **4.2.3 Redemption**

God promised redemption. For this God sent his Son to die for people who deserved death because of disobedience; to reconcile them with God and overcome the human enmity and alienation and to open the way to salvation. This sacrifice underlines the immense value that God attaches to His creation, not least mankind. God wants to restore wholeness and shalom. All people, both men and women, are called to follow this example; in love and justice, obedience and humility each with his/her own gifts and capabilities. Jesus's redemption through perfect leadership, giving oneself, can now direct towards individual redemption, one person at a time. It is symbolized by giving oneself up for the other.

Men and women equally share in the salvation of the gospel. In that sense in Christ there is man nor woman (Galatians 3:28). Jesus dealt with women in a very respectful and personal way that broke

through degrading customs of that time. He involved them in His mission, even though the apostles were all men. Redemption restores creation and its normative structures, it does not cancel these. In marriage husband and wife are called to reflect the relationship between Christ and His church in their mutual love and willingness to serve (Ephesians 5:25-33).

#### **4.2.4 Restoration**

This perspective deals with the destination of history and of the world. It refers to the belief that God will guide history to the restoration of His Kingdom. This will happen through the crisis of judgment that will reveal the deepest motives of people – when goodness will be again connected openly with truth. The proud, the wicked and the violent will not inherit the earth but the meek, the peacemakers and the pure in heart.<sup>37</sup> Main principles of restoration are the realization that the Kingdom of God does not come to pass by our own efforts, and serving and encouraging on the basis of what God has done and promises. We are called to care, and to enjoy and celebrate the good things of life. If individuals live these principles out this restoration may also lead to the restoration of families, societies and cultures. Giving oneself on behalf of one another is following in Jesus' footsteps<sup>38</sup>.

This perspective underlines what is said above about mutual love and support between husband and wife. At the same time it relativizes to some extent the differentiation of mankind in man and woman, in the sense that according to Jesus, sexuality and marriage will not play the role it does now in human life (Lucas 20:35; cf. I Corinthians 7:29-31). What this will mean for gender we do not know. We do know that gender is broader than sexuality and it seems unlikely that the creational differentiation between male and female will disappear completely. Male and female may achieve their destiny as different, complementary forms of mankind of equal value, reflecting some of the differentiation of the Trinity in the Godhead.

### **4.3 Christian position on specific issues**

#### **4.3.1 Introduction**

After the presentation of a general Christian approach of gender we will apply this in discussing some major issues that frequently come back in debates on gender. After dealing with some conceptual matters we will come back to the issue of poverty and gender, that is central in the discourse on gender and development.

It can be noted that many issues in gender inequality reside in deeper underlying needs for change in culture, be it in familial, society, cultural or more structural realms.

#### **4.3.2 Gender equality and differentiation**

For Christians, all people are of equal value. It is the conception of substantive, universal, moral equality. That all people, independent of gender, age or social position, deserve the same dignity and the same

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<sup>37</sup> Mathew 5:2-6

<sup>38</sup> Mathew 20:25-28

respect is a normative teaching of Christianity whereby equality of human beings before God is a principle foundation for action.<sup>39</sup>

Equality does not mean equal and equivalence in all aspects. God created male and female, both equally made in the image of God.<sup>40</sup> Different, but with equal value. Both man and woman are called together to 'do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves' and to 'look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others'.<sup>41</sup> There is a need for equal rights and opportunities for both men and women. All have equal rights but have different needs.

One of the most beautiful descriptions of a woman and wife in the society of her time is given in Proverbs 31. She is fully integrated in her society; it shows her fully engaged in her house, but also in her commercial activities (selling and buying); respectful to her servants, caring and sharing, and respected by them. Finally, she is the pride of her husband, and even the elders of her community congratulate her husband on her account. In this old biblical account women have their own responsibility and freedom of action in certain areas of life. Faithfulness and diligence and to do good in love, humility and peaceability is the redemption of fallen nature. Both man and woman, but also children and the elderly, the socially underprivileged or disabled – each one a dignified image of his/her Creator. Each and every one with his/her own different privileges and responsibilities. It is not in all respects an example to follow in all circumstances in its details; that would be unhistorical Biblicism. But it presents an interesting image of a contextualized form of dignity, responsibility and freedom of both husband and wife in the patriarchal context of that time.

### **4.3.3 Individual rights, relationality and rights based approach**

In the context of the human rights discourse, the rights of individuals are defined. In this discourse, both men and women stand as individuals in society. A just society indeed grants individual persons certain rights. In Christianity the individual is highly valued. But not made an absolute. Human beings are not living as pure individuals but as social beings in all kinds of relationships and social structures that entail responsibilities. Hence, the actions towards empowerment of individuals will have effects not only at the individual or familial levels but also for society and culture as a whole. Hence, these values need to be set into familial, communal and cultural relationships. Without this 'setting of context' any concern addressed may be in detriment to that society.<sup>42</sup> All should have equal dignity and worth for a sense of societal justice, peace and harmony. This also applies to gender issues. Individual gender rights do not stand alone but function in society. Human right issues cannot be pertinent only to individual purposes, but need to be addressed in the larger context of society and culture, the contextual framework.

In light of this Prisma favours a Rights-based approach as elaborated in a series of related processes indicated with the acronym PANEL (see excursus).<sup>43</sup> This is also the approach chosen by the ICCO Cooperation in its theory of change and in its gender policy. For us this broad elaboration is rooted in and informed by our basic beliefs regarding God creation and mankind.

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<sup>39</sup> Gosepath, S., 2011. Equality. The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy  
<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2011/entries/equality/>

<sup>40</sup> Genesis 1:27

<sup>41</sup> 1 Timothy 2

<sup>42</sup> Social 'atomization' did not represent greater freedom but greater isolation and dependence<sup>42</sup>

<sup>43</sup> <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0017/001791/179186e.pdf>

### **Excuse: The Human Rights-Based Approach to Development**

*Some basic principles of human rights can be represented by the acronym PANEL*

**Participation** – People are recognized as key actors in their own development, rather than passive recipients of commodities and services. Participation is both a means and a goal and analysis includes all stakeholders. Strategic partnerships should be developed and sustained.

**Accountability** – A rights-based approach requires the development of laws, administrative procedures, and practices and mechanisms to ensure the fulfilment of entitlements, as well as opportunities to address denials and violations. It also calls for the translation of universal standards into locally determined benchmarks for measuring progress and enhancing accountability.

**Non-discrimination and Equality** – A rights-based approach requires a particular focus on addressing discrimination and inequality, focussing on marginalized, disadvantaged, and excluded groups.

**Empowerment** – Empowerment is the process by which people's capabilities to demand and use their human rights grows. They are empowered to claim their rights rather than simply wait for policies, legislation or the provision of services. The development process should be locally owned. Empowerment also prepares people and societies to make a meaningful and constructive use of rights; e.g. equal rights to own land for men and women not only requires legal action by the authorities but only becomes meaningful when women are enabled to cultivate the land.

**Linkages to Human Rights Standards** – Programming is informed by the recommendations of international human rights bodies and mechanisms.

#### **4.3.4 Masculinities and femininities**

For the roles of male and female in society and culture, sexuality is the normative expression for gender choice. The understanding of femininities and masculinities, its familial and societal functions can vary drastically from culture to culture.

A helpful rendering of biblical teaching on this matter we find in a document prepared in the context of the Micah network:<sup>44</sup>

*“Men-related Bible stories show that there is not an only way to be a man. Violence and discrimination against women based on literal reading of the sacred pages are closely related to a male-oriented and patriarchal culture seeping through our thoughts as individuals, societies and churches. Such patriarchal culture dictates and demands men to behave in a given way. Every man that does not follow that hegemonic pattern is considered as less man than the rest.*

*In Jesus of Nazareth we find a different speech about God from the paternalistic one spread by the religious leaders at that time. Jesus addressed to God as "Abba", that is, father (Mk 14, 35-36; Rom 8, 15). When he says his father is his followers' father as well, Jesus gives his disciples an example of mercy, love and generosity that every man should have and give to those around him without distinction. Jesus' attitude is way far from the picture of a distant God and asks men to do the same: look at each other as siblings and treat them, being men or women, as we would like to be treated”.*

In his PhD thesis on masculinities in African Christianity, Adriaan van Klinken examines and compares how African theologians and local churches engage in a quest for transformed masculinities in the era of

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<sup>44</sup> [http://www.micahnetwork.org/sites/default/files/doc/resources/conclusions\\_principles\\_and\\_actions\\_to\\_develop\\_gender\\_policies.pdf](http://www.micahnetwork.org/sites/default/files/doc/resources/conclusions_principles_and_actions_to_develop_gender_policies.pdf)

HIV. While some theologians present a radical critique of patriarchy and provide a vision to transform masculinities from patriarchy to gender justice, the case studies show that local churches make use of religious concepts and ideals that in a way can be considered patriarchal, in order to define and promote an alternative type of masculinity among men. He argues for an alternative, more nuanced analytical approach that focuses on men's agency as enabled by religious discourses and practices in churches.<sup>45</sup>

Against this background Prisma underlines the importance of empowering both men and women within their social context. This is a necessary first step to enabling women to advocate for their rights and use any available services. We have to be aware that in a context of a totally unequal balance of power, empowering only women might have negative consequences for women and girls, because it increases gender tensions. Therefore, we should also involve men and families in programmes that focus on the equal and respectful relations between men and women (and girls). This can be both a key measure for success as well as simply helping men understand what gender is about. Healthy relationships between men and women benefit both genders and strengthen the family.

#### 4.3.5 The burden of poverty and gender

Reducing poverty and inequity is one of the main motives why the UN addresses 'poverty and gender' (cf. chapter 2). As a matter of fact 'half the world are women' but of those 'over 70% lives below the poverty line'.<sup>46</sup> Moreover, this does not only affect women but also their children. As such the persistent and increasing burden of poverty on women is a very important issue related to gender. God created humankind in paradise, where all his needs were supplied and he was called to look after the garden.<sup>47</sup> As such poverty, both spiritually and physically is a consequence of the broken relationship with God and, as a result, with one another. The escape from poverty into the ability to work honourably for sustenance may be seen as a manifestation of redemption. Both for men and women there should be joy and fulfilment.<sup>48</sup> In a Christian approach poverty is addressed in many ways. From addressing hunger, thirst and nakedness directly with an order to feed and clothe.<sup>49</sup> Moreover, God legislated in His law to enable for self-sufficiency: letting the poor collect grain at the edges of the field<sup>50</sup>, eliminating slavery<sup>51</sup>, debt<sup>52</sup>, and disrespect for the poor and suffering.

In many programmes women receive financial help to for instance to set up a small business. This may support a woman to develop her economic activities and it may give her some moral support.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Klinken, A. van (2011), "The Need for Circumcised Men": The Quest for Transformed Masculinities in African Christianity in the Context of the HIV Epidemic. PhD Thesis Utrecht University

<sup>46</sup> Global poverty info bank <http://www.globalpovertyproject.com/infobank/women> and UNIFEM on gender issues [http://www.unifem.org/gender\\_issues/women\\_poverty\\_economics/](http://www.unifem.org/gender_issues/women_poverty_economics/)

<sup>47</sup> Genesis 2:15

<sup>48</sup> Philippians 4:4

<sup>49</sup> Isaiah 58:9

<sup>50</sup> Leviticus 19:8-10

<sup>51</sup> God sends redemption to 'broken spirit and harsh slavery' (Exodus 6:9), God provided in His law to free someone that sold himself into slavery (Exodus 21:2)

<sup>52</sup> Nehemiah 10:31

<sup>53</sup> What does giving cash transfers only to women do to household dynamics?  
<http://www.oxfamblogs.org/fp2p/?p=6583>

However, it is also important to consider the possible effect on her relationships? Will it bring healing to the familial structure and to her society? Will the fact that a woman is raising an income increase the respect from her husband and from men in general? Or, where men will be less respected, with a loss of their responsibility to care for the family, what could the consequence be for the relationships and for possible violence in the family? The point we want to make is that helping a community and families to develop, requires an integral approach in which the effects of a certain programme on the relationships of the beneficiaries and on the wider community are taken into account. Therefore, in cooperation in development it is the responsibility of our partners and of churches to provide and implement moral guidance in their community.

#### **4.4 Concluding remarks**

Because God gives and sustains life, we must also protect and nurture it. God calls for the protection of human life and holds humanity accountable for its destruction. Unconditional Christian love is to dedicate our lives to the flourishing of the lives of others. The community of believers is called to demonstrate Christian love in tangible, practical, and substantive ways also in gender issues. Hence, our strategies must reflect our commitment to promote equality in diversity and dignity, in sexual responsibility, to guard life. This should firstly be expressed in family life, be it church family or nuclear and extended family, then in the local community as an outflow of their inner actions and beliefs, and finally at community and state/country level. Decisions about human life from its beginning to its end are best made within the context of healthy family relationships, with the support of the faith and social community.

In a time of globalization, some worldwide issues are shifting, like e.g. concepts of gender, especially the so called masculinities, the concept of individuality versus community and finally the concept of equality and inequalities. In our view the way out of gender conflicts and violence is a transformation of the innermost human being towards a Godly image represented for us in Jesus' walk on earth. Christian 'social justice' is best expressed in the 'loose the chains of injustice, to set the oppressed free, share food with the hungry, provide the poor wanderer with shelter, clothe the naked, take care of family, not doing as pleased or speaking idle words."<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Isaiah 58: 6-7, 13

## 5 PRACTICAL ISSUES TO ADDRESS WITH PARTNER ORGANISATIONS

### 5.1 Framework for discussion or dialogue

This chapter aims to give some ideas for discussing gender issues. We are aware that some questions on the topic may be culturally sensitive and not easy for you to discuss. However, we invite members and their partners to establish safe contexts in which everyone can freely share her or his experiences and opinion.

Some principles or steps for open dialogue (adapted from the Framework for dialogue of the EAA: <http://frameworkfordialogue.net/about/>)

- The dialogue is driven by the local partners and priorities in their context
- All actions and dialogue are based on evidence, both quantitative and qualitative
- The dialogue begins with experiences of men and women and the impact of gender inequality on their lives
- All participants in the dialogue process agree to a 'do no harm' approach, especially in areas of disagreement
- All stakeholders enter the dialogue as equal partners, allowing full participation and involvement in decision making throughout the dialogue and emerging joint actions
- New partnerships are formed and 'out of the box' thinking and solutions are encouraged
- The focus of the process is to move beyond dialogue to collaborative and constructive actions
- The methodology and facilitation of the dialogue aims to create a space where all entering into dialogue can be sure that they will not meet discrimination or judgement.

### 5.2 Questions that could be used to address gender

1. Regarding the vision of the partner organisation
  - a. What comes to mind when one talks about gender issues?
  - b. What are the problems related to gender inequality that you see are in need of being addressed in your specific context and culture?
  - c. What are the most vulnerable groups for these issues and how can these be addressed in context of the whole community: male vs. female, young vs. old, weaker parties vs. strong, leaders?
  - d. What are the underlying issues that need to be addressed?
2. Regarding the position of the organization
  - a. Do you have policies on the different topics related to this matter?
  - b. What are the specific objectives of these policies and/or strategies?
  - c. Would you like suggestions to assist you to phrase your own position on the issue?
3. Regarding activities
  - a. How can the addressing of issues related to gender positively affect your community/ organization?
  - b. What are the challenges for the implementation of gender equality in your organization?

- c. How do you deal with the culturally sensitive issues related to gender equality? Are there related issues that should be addressed?
4. What are your ideas/opinions on gender and related issues? And how do you address these in implementation of your programs?
    - a. Social status of women
    - b. Domestic violence
    - c. Reproductive and sexual rights
    - d. Violence in times of war
    - e. Economic stability and women's rights
  5. How can you promote and implement the vision of gender equality and help in achieving of the millennium goals of the UN?

### 5.3 Other helpful resources

#### 5.3.1 Christian resources

Quite a number of organizations have developed or collected tools in the field of gender and gender equality.

Tear Fund UK has committed itself to the vision of restoring relationships between men and women, boys and girls, to how God originally intended them to be. They want to be better at identifying ways in which men and women are provided with equal opportunity and choice. They want to improve participation, benefits, access to and control of project resources and activities wherever they work – achieving greater equality. See more at <http://tilz.tearfund.org/en/themes/gender/>

In their page on sexual violence in conflict zones, 2 interesting initiatives are mentioned<sup>55</sup>:

- *We Will Speak Out* is a global Christian coalition committed to seeing the end of sexual violence across communities around the world ([www.wewillspeakout.org](http://www.wewillspeakout.org)).
- *Restored* is an international Christian alliance seeking to transform relationships and end violence against women ([www.restoredrelationships.org](http://www.restoredrelationships.org)).

In 2010 the WCC published *Created in God's image; from hegemony to partnership. A Church manual on men as partners: promoting positive masculinities*.<sup>56</sup> This gender training manual is the product of a collaborative process of the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC). The manual provides tools for workshops with men at the community level. According to the preface 'the book is a result of men and women of God reading the word of God and daring to ask critical questions about how we can be more faithful to God in how women and men relate'.

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<sup>55</sup> [http://tilz.tearfund.org/en/resources/publications/footsteps/footsteps\\_91-100/footsteps\\_92/sexual\\_violence\\_in\\_conflict\\_zones/](http://tilz.tearfund.org/en/resources/publications/footsteps/footsteps_91-100/footsteps_92/sexual_violence_in_conflict_zones/)

<sup>56</sup> [http://www.reformator.hr/Pdf/PositiveMasculinitiesGenderManual\\_0.pdf](http://www.reformator.hr/Pdf/PositiveMasculinitiesGenderManual_0.pdf)

CCIH (Christian Connections for International Health) has some good resources on gender based violence: <http://www.ccih.org/sexual-a-gender-based-violence.html>

The Micha Network has some interesting resources on gender (<http://www.micahnetwork.org/resource-topics?topic=gender>) and on gender based violence (<http://www.micahnetwork.org/2-integral-mission-and-justice>). In their conclusions of the regional consultation on integral mission, gender and violence against women<sup>57</sup> they give some principles and actions to develop gender policies. Based on a situational diagnosis, they propose to plan actions like sensitization, pastoral care, education and advocacy that meet the existing realities properly.

PACSA has developed a resource on Men and Masculinities in South Africa, a three part series comprising stories, analysis and faith based resources.<sup>58</sup> These will be available for download on their website from December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2013.

Transforming communities (<http://www.transformcommunities.org/>) has an interesting publication *One in Spirit, Domestic Violence Advocates and Faith and Spiritual Leaders Working in Partnership to End Domestic Violence*.<sup>59</sup>

### 5.3.2 General sources on gender mainstreaming

Apart from the above mentioned sources, many organizations have made gender mainstreaming tools available online. Some examples:

Worldbank, ready-to-use material, including a range of tools for practical "how-to" strategies collected from program and project experiences around the world:

<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXTGENDER/0,,contentMDK:21358556~menuPK:3851633~pagePK:210058~piPK:210062~theSitePK:336868,00.html>

UNESCO: <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/unesco/themes/gender-equality/capacity-development/gender-mainstreaming-tools/>

European Communion: <http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sp/gender-toolkit/index.htm>

UN Women (scroll down the page to get to policies and tools): <http://www.unwomen.org/en/how-we-work/un-system-coordination/gender-mainstreaming>

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<sup>57</sup> [http://www.micahnetwork.org/sites/default/files/doc/resources/conclusions\\_principles\\_and\\_actions\\_to\\_develop\\_gender\\_policies\\_0.pdf](http://www.micahnetwork.org/sites/default/files/doc/resources/conclusions_principles_and_actions_to_develop_gender_policies_0.pdf)

<sup>58</sup> <http://www.pacsa.org.za/featured-publications/244-men-and-masculinities-in-south-africa-book-launch.html>

<sup>59</sup> [http://www.transformcommunities.org/sites/default/files/One%20in%20Spirit-%20Online%20Publication%20and%20Resource\\_1.pdf](http://www.transformcommunities.org/sites/default/files/One%20in%20Spirit-%20Online%20Publication%20and%20Resource_1.pdf)

## Annex 1 More on international context

In the 55th session of the UN<sup>60</sup> the Millennium Development Goals,<sup>61</sup> running for the period of 2000 – 2015, were instituted as the practical targets for the UN and all the government leaders involved, on issues of injustice and poverty. Of these several are directly related to woman or gender issues, notably MDG goal 3, ‘promoting gender equality’, goal 4, ‘reducing child mortality’ and goal 5, ‘improve maternal health’. However, all of the goals should be achieved for gender equality.<sup>62</sup>

In aiming for specific goals on certain issues such as from the MDGs for example, at country or local level, the underlying causes of the problem may fail to be addressed. Such are the problems with MDG2 (universal education). Many a girl, even though schools and non-discrimination laws are in place, still does not come to school regularly because of assigned work at home, early marriages or fear of violence en route. The same counts for MDG 5 (maternal health) where factors such as ‘accessibility’ may play an important role jeopardizing its achievement, due to hospitals being far away, or difficult to reach, or ignorance (individual or cultural) which may lead to long delays before seeking care. Finally, in the same MDGs, underlying issues such as violence and abuse are not directly addressed.

Meanwhile in the context of the UN extensive discussions are running in view of the policy formulation for the Post MDG, Post 2015 agenda. The High Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, instituted by the Secretary-general of UN Ban Ki Moon, produced a report: ‘A new global partnership’.<sup>63</sup> The Panel views five big, transformative shifts as the priorities for a forward-looking, compelling and integrated sustainable development agenda. None of these five explicitly refers to gender. However, the first change is: ‘Leave no one behind’, demanding equality of all people and hence gender equality. The panel also formulates illustrative goals that should be pursued in order to achieve the overall goal of ending extreme poverty in all its forms in the context of sustainable development. The second goal is: Empower girls and women and achieve gender equality. This is elaborated into four national targets.<sup>64</sup> However, so far this report is an advice and the goals are called illustrative and the nations are asked to voluntarily take measures. It remains to be seen to what extent the Post 2015 Agenda will lead to formal commitments of national governments.

*UN Women* recently presented a position paper which calls for a transformative agenda to realize gender equality<sup>65</sup>. They plead for an independent objective for gender equality, based on human rights, consisting of three aspects: freedom of violence against women and girls, gender equality in capabilities

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<sup>60</sup><http://www.un.org/millennium/declaration/ares552e.pdf>

<sup>61</sup>Official list of MDG indicators <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/mdg/Resources/Attach/Indicators/OfficialList2008.pdf>

<sup>62</sup>See also [http://www.unicef.org/statistics/index\\_24304.html](http://www.unicef.org/statistics/index_24304.html),  
[http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/Resources/Static/Products/Progress2011/11-31339%20\(E\)%20MDG%20Report%202011\\_Book%20LR.pdf](http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/Resources/Static/Products/Progress2011/11-31339%20(E)%20MDG%20Report%202011_Book%20LR.pdf) and <http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/default.aspx>

<sup>63</sup> [http://www.un.org/sg/management/pdf/HLP\\_P2015\\_Report.pdf](http://www.un.org/sg/management/pdf/HLP_P2015_Report.pdf)

<sup>64</sup> A new global partnership, p. 30, 34-35

<sup>65</sup> <http://www.unwomen.org/~media/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/News/Stories/post-2015-case-for-standalone-gender-goal%20pdf.pdf/>

and access to means and opportunities, and gender equality in decision making. Beside this, UN is calling for integration of gender equality in the other priority areas of the post 2015 agenda.<sup>66</sup>

Some areas of concern may have been addressed from a statistical standpoint (see the report of 2011 *World Bank* report on income disparities<sup>67</sup>). However, a Reuters report of the Trust Law still calls for dire needs when it mentions that the *World's five most dangerous places for woman*' are Afghanistan, Congo, Pakistan, India and Somalia<sup>68</sup>. The topics of concern are related to health, discrimination, and cultural, sexual and non-sexual violence and trafficking.<sup>69</sup>

The *UN Women Commission on Population and Development* argues that 'with the right support for their safe transition into adulthood, girls and young women can make significant contributions to economic and social development and join the ranks of political leadership' (April 2012).

In 2005 the *protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on women's rights*, made up in 2003, came into force and was ratified by 26 countries in 2009. This protocol, which added the rights missing in the existing African charter on human and people's rights, provides broad protection for the rights of women, including sexual and reproductive rights, thus affirming reproductive choice and autonomy as a key human right. Accordingly, the protocol became the first international document to explicitly articulate the right of women to medical abortion when pregnancy results from sexual assault, rape or incest or when continuation of pregnancy endangers the life of the pregnant women. Furthermore, the protocol made history as the first international document to explicitly call for the legal prohibition of female mutilation".<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> <http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2013/6/un-women-launches-global-call-for-a-transformative-agenda-to-make-gender-equality-a-reality/>

<sup>67</sup> The income of the global female population (over 24 years of age) has been addressed qua gender disparities, this is not so for the younger population. Much stronger impact on age than gender, which is largely due to higher fertility rates among poorer women (Ortiz, I., 2011. *Global Inequality: Beyond the Bottom Billion A Rapid Review of Income Distribution in 141 Countries*. Global Income Distribution and Gender in 2007 in PPP constant 2005 international dollars. Source: Authors' calculations using World Bank (2011), UNU-WIDER (2008) and United Nations (2009), According to the inter-country accounting model

<sup>68</sup> TrustLaw, June 15, 2011 - <http://www.global-sisterhood-network.org/content/view/2606/59/>

<sup>69</sup> <http://www.global-sisterhood-network.org/content/view/2606/59/>

<sup>70</sup> Sylvia Tamale (ed.) *African sexualities, a Reader*. Cape Town/Dakar/Nairobi/Oxford: Pambazuka Press 2011; 315-316.

## Annex 2 A reformed philosophical framework

For gender equity and empowerment, it may be hard to analyse what are the true causes and all aspects to be acknowledged for action. To be able to recognize underlying issues and facets for possible cures and solutions, a modality (aspects) framework may be of help. One such framework is Dooyeweerd's *Theory of Modal Aspects*.<sup>71</sup> It is a framework that distinguishes a variety of irreducible aspects in reality. These different aspects of reality range from the physical (kinematic, spatial and arithmetic) to the faith or spiritual aspects. Going through this whole set of aspects can help to prevent overlooking aspects of an issue that have better be taken into account. In Table 1 we present an attempt of using the modal aspects as perspectives identifying the implications of gender and gender issues, using gender violence as an example).

In the table the problem of violence is broken down according to the modal aspects. From a basic level, one can see that the problem begins with its quantitative (so many times), kinematic (beating for example), spatial (it happens in a certain place) and it affects the body in its physical shape and functioning, and it causes bodily and psychological suffering (biotic and psychic); it happens because of a breakdown of reasoning ( analytical), many times this happens due to a breakdown of moral conventions, sometimes according to social conventions (formative) and a lack of communication (lingual). Furthermore, it is set in a family or society (familial), may have economic aspects and may affect the aesthetics of the woman who is suffering the beating, and it is set in an ethical background, that needs to be analysed juridically. Finally, violence is a loss of moral values and is an insult to the Creator, as humans are made in the image of God.

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<sup>71</sup><http://www.dooy.salford.ac.uk/aspects.html>, <http://www.dooy.salford.ac.uk/#theory.asp> and <http://www.dooy.salford.ac.uk/kernels.html>

<b>Aspects of reality</b>	<b>Implication of gender&amp;sexuality</b>	<b>Issues at stake with violence</b>	<b>Healing steps, restoration</b>
1 ) quantitative aspect (discrete amount)	Two different genders: female and male	Beating or abuse of a body, many times, hard?	We need to break down the cycle but at what level?
2) spatial (Continuous space)	Genders differ in their spatial manifestation	An attack on physical integrity	Stop when close, educate and heal whenever possible
3) kinematic (movement)	Gender expression develops, 'moves' in individual and in history	Violence often includes moving the victim physically or causing strong emotional movements; threat of violence can have Implication for mobility of the victim	Care to further a process of recovering and restoration. If necessary and possible moving the victim to a safe place
4) physical (energy, mass, forces)	Gender demonstrates itself in physical differences, male generally stronger than female	Can cause physical disorders, deviations	Medical and nursing care
5) biotic/organic (life)	Gender has a biological substrate and is related to life, procreation	Causes bodily suffering, damage to health and normal biological functioning	Separation of parties and caring for wounds
6) sensitive/psychic (feeling, perception)	Gender manifests itself in feelings, emotions	Causes psychological disintegration and suffering; loss much deeper than physical abuse	Bring back wholeness through possible therapies & sensitivity training (both sides may be in need as violence goes through generations)
7) analytical, logical (distinction, conceptualization)	Gender is a theoretical concept; in humanity two different genders can be distinguished as well as ambivalences	What (perverse) 'logic' is behind violence; violence can cause breakdown of reason (analytical functions) leading to irrationality	Restore the capability to analyse circumstances and think and reason about a way out. Teach self-control, such as for example 'wait with sexual intercourse', 'control anger', no abuse accepted even in war, etc.
8) formative/cultural (deliberate shaping)	Understanding of gender and gender roles is strongly culturally influenced	Cultural concepts and customs can form 'justification' for violence	Challenge deleterious cultural customs and try to help people to develop a different view
9) lingual (Symbolic meaning)	Ways of indicating/ describing gender as a strong influence on gender manifestation and experience	Caused by a breakdown of communications; what message does the violence emit	Restore communication and understanding
10) social (social relationships)	Gender is a socially shaped and partly constructed concept; gender is a relational concept (roles)	Social structures sometimes provoke or cover up violence; structures may embody a form of violence	Discuss/address and call for change; (re)vitalize actual positive social structures in bringing about a change in behaviour
11) Economic (frugal management of resources; stewardship)	Gender roles often a economic implication; division of labour between genders	Dis-economy may be a factor to enhance violence, violence is anti-economic	Help towards economic stabilization for positive change: reach out for economic equity
12) esthetical (harmony, expressiveness)	Gender differences and equality can bring harmonious; gender difference generally provoke experience of beauty in the opposite sex (or in some body of the same sex in case of homosexuality)	Loss of beauty and wholeness physical/psychical/societal	Physical healing: treatment of for example broken bones or reparative surgery of cut off nose and ears, etc. Restore as much a possible external and internal harmony
13) juridical (due, justice)	Gender equality; no unjustified differences for the law (e.g. maternity leave is a justified difference)	Criminal act: punishable Denying rights to one gender (mostly the female) is violation of rights and illegal	liability of ownership of liable person with justice of suffering individual with equanimity
14) Moral (care, love)	Genders equal in dignity; meant to be complementary in social structures, mutual care and love in intimate sexual	Affects dignity of personality Loss of moral values of dignity of person	Restore the human dignity of each individual; Restoration of full human dignity and integrity: physical, mental and spiritual

	relationships		
15) spiritual/ faith (trust, commitment)	Male and female equally created in Gods image; Gender difference and relations expression of image of God Commitment to equality in differentiation leading for gender policy and practice	Insult to the created being and its Creator (as we are created in God's image)	Restore the image of God in each person: by giving it respect, honour and love; The true value of each human being should be leading in all human actions and relations