



Gender Justice Policy



THE
LUTHERAN
WORLD
FEDERATION

A Communion
of Churches

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Editor: Elaine Neuenfeldt

Design and Layout: Communication Services
Department for Theology and
Public Witness

Photos: © Barbara Robra and
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Publisher: **The Lutheran World Federation**
– A Communion of Churches
Department for Theology and
Public Witness
Women in Church and Society
Route de Ferney 150
P. O. Box 2100
1211 Geneva 2, Switzerland

Printed in Switzerland

ISBN 978-2-940459-31-5

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Foreword

The biblical call to uphold justice is at the very heart of the communion's self-understanding. God's grace liberates us, brings us together in Christ and enables us to live and work together for justice, peace and reconciliation.

The LWF is committed to being inclusive and enabling the full and equitable participation of women and men in church life and society, and in its decision-making processes, activities and programs. It looks back at a history of decisions and actions that express this commitment.

This LWF Gender Justice Policy, approved by the LWF Council in 2013, is a tool to enhance the communion's journey towards inclusiveness. Developed in a participatory process, it has grown out of experiences in member churches, is enriched by the biblical and theological bases of our Lutheran identity, and provides guidance and methodologies for contextualizing action plans and strategies in the regions and integrating gender as a crosscutting priority in all of the communion's work.



LWF General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge
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Like the LWF's historic commitment to overcome violence against women and its affirmation of women in leadership positions, the Gender Justice Policy is yet another milestone as the LWF moves toward realizing its vision of inclusiveness.

The itinerary developed in this document opens windows of opportunities to engage in movements of change in relationships and structures. It is an invitation to everyone—particularly church leaders, theologians, women and men in leadership and decision-making positions, people managing programs and

projects—to affirm gender justice as a matter of faith. Thus, gender justice points at fundamental dimensions of the being of the church and its prophetic voice in the public space.

The gender justice policy comes to you at a time when women continue to face challenges in church and society and both women and men continue to hear God's call for relationships based on justice. It is published in times during which the LWF communion hears the call for ongoing renewal (*semper reformanda*) as it prepares for the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation in 2017. I commend it to your prayerful study and discernment so that it finds ways of being expressed in the structures and life of the church. Because gender relationships too are subject to God's transforming power they can be renewed to become just and equitable.

Rev. Martin Junge
General Secretary
The Lutheran World Federation



Walking Together on the Road to Gender Justice: A Pedagogical Journey

Set up road markers for yourself, make yourself signposts; consider well the highway, the road by which you went (Jer 31:21).

In the LWF communion, the pedagogical discussion on gender justice

will contribute to the wider reflection on how we intend to teach, learn, accompany, admonish and mutually support one another as we continue to journey together toward being a communion in which inclusiveness is concretely lived out.

The LWF Gender Justice Policy rests on a set of rules and precepts that orient concrete steps toward implementing gender justice. These are to facilitate the process of adapting action plans to different contextual realities.

Thus we read,

The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; the decrees of the Lord are sure, making wise the simple; the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is clear, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever; the ordinances of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey, and drippings of the honeycomb (Ps 19:7–10).

The biblical image of the law and precepts reviving the soul and rejoicing the heart helps women and men to recreate justice and dignity in relationship.

The document is divided into two parts: the Gender Justice Policy Principles and the Gender Justice Policy Methodology.

The LWF Gender Justice Policy Principles provide a framework to orient the implementation of gender

justice commitments at all levels of the communion

Gender Justice Policy Principles

The ten principles are central to expressing the LWF communion's affirmations with regard to gender justice. They are at the heart of what gender justice means for the communion, the lenses through which the communion's actions are to be examined and the guide posts or road markers along the communion's journey to gender justice.

Gender Justice Policy Methodology

The LWF Gender Justice Policy methodology provides the tools for the implementation of the gender justice principles through the regional expressions and member churches with the expectation that it will be adapted to local contexts.

The process will be monitored through regional platforms connected with the regional expressions.

At the global level, the General Secretary will report on the progress of the implementation of the LWF Gender Justice Policy in the communion in his report to the Council.

Methodologies and instruments will be developed so that programs and processes can be more easily owned and accessed by concerned groups in the member churches.

The goal is to establish learning circles and communities of practice where knowledge is shared and mutual support and accompaniment are effectively carried out.

Biblical Foundation and Rationale

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. . . . God saw everything that [God] had made, and indeed, it was very good” (Gen 1:1-2, 31a).

In Genesis, the creation stories are an evocative narration of creation in which all that exists is utterly dependent on God. The story of creation in Genesis 2 is often used to argue not only that humanity exists in opposites, but also that one form of humanity (males) is superior to another (females). However, the creation stories in Genesis may also be understood as expressing the idea that the most important difference exists between God and creation, not between male and female. Creation depends on God; this is the primary theological relationship concerning creation.

This fundamental distinction between God and creation is defined by love, not by an exclusive gender binary among or between humanity. Even though the creation stories have sometimes been read to buttress not only the differentiation of gender but also the devaluation of females in relationship to males, more comprehensive readings show that this is not the case.

Another starting point can be equality (cf. Gen 1:27). God created everyone equally. God also calls humanity equally in a shared vocation of stewardship to care for God's ongoing creation.

The ethics of care and love embodied in this reading of Genesis emphasize an ethics of gender justice because hospitality, love and an embrace of difference prevail from the perspective that humans are always before the eyes or in the presence of God. Together human beings are called to be stewards to one another and all of creation.

Then God said, “Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.” So God created humankind in his image in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them (Gen 1:26–27).

The Holy Scriptures provide a basis for inclusiveness. As we read in the gospels, the ways in which Jesus related to women were open, inclusive, welcoming and restoring. Biblical testimonies affirm that God's Word is the word of abundant life for all—women and men.

As a community of equals, through baptism, the church is called prophetically to announce and practice inclusion. As we read in Galatians 3:27–28,

As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.

In terms of gender relations, these biblical and theological readings inspire the communion to be a community in transformative dialogue. The full and equal partnership between women and men is possible as is the breaking down of gender stereotypes that subordinate especially women, but also men, and violate their God-given integrity and dignity. As the communion continues on its journey of faith and hope, the Holy Spirit sets us free to interpret biblical texts in life-giving and life-affirming ways. This is the foundational mandate for actions taken at the decision-making level of the LWF.

Mandate

In October 2009, the LWF Council received the document *"It will not*



*be so among you!” A Faith Reflection on Gender and Power*¹ and voted “to encourage the member churches to actively participate in the follow-up process leading to the development of an LWF gender policy.”

In 2010, the Eleventh Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation adopted the following two important resolutions:

LWF principles of inclusivity:

Gender balance:

The LWF Assembly, Council, Officers, and all other committees and task forces, including at all regional levels shall be composed of at least forty percent women and at least forty percent men. And that the gender quota is respected also among youth representatives.

In all activities that it organizes at all regional levels, the LWF shall respect this basic principle, and LWF staff shall encourage those with whom it cooperates to do

likewise.² The basic principle also applies to executive staff in the LWF communion office.³

Resolution on gender justice:

We call on the Assembly to urge member churches to re-commit to genuine, practical and effective implementation of LWF policies and decisions regarding the full participation of women in the life of the church—and of the LWF communion—as well as in society.

We call on member churches to set appropriate legislation and regulatory policies that enable and ensure women in leadership positions—ordained and lay—and the

opportunities to pursue theological education. We ask that churches who do not ordain women prayerfully consider the effect that inaction and refusal on this matter has on those who are precluded from exercising their God-given calling because they are women. The pain of exclusion and the loss of God-given gifts are experienced by the whole church.

We call on member churches and the LWF secretariat to include gender analyses, as biblical and theological tools, in all aspects of the life of member churches in the communion, including diaconal and advocacy work.

We ask for a clear action plan for the development of contextualized gender policies that may be implemented on all levels in the member churches and be mandatory for the LWF secretariat. We call on the Council to develop and approve such a guiding process.

We call for the support of women leaders, lay and ordained, particularly women bishops and presidents, as vital members of the communion.

We call for the LWF and its member churches to make a clear

² Acknowledging the existing challenges, meetings and activities in which the basic principle has not been applied are not to be declared invalid, but their non-compliance with the basic principle shall be formally recognized and actions to improve on this need to be planned.

³ *Give Us Today Our Daily Bread*, Official Report, LWF Eleventh Assembly, Stuttgart, Germany, 20–27 July 2010 (Geneva: The Lutheran World Federation, 2010), 61.

¹ At www.lutheranworld.org/content/resource-it-will-not-be-so-among-you-faith-reflection-gender-and-power

stand against domestic violence, acknowledging every person's right to feel safe and respectfully treated, also when in their own homes.

We ask the Council to have the issue of gender justice as a standing item on its agenda. Because there is an imbalance between male and female youth at this Assembly, the Council should pay special attention to this.⁴

Meeting in 2012 in Bogota, Colombia, the LWF Council requested the Communion Office to present a draft LWF Gender Justice Policy to the Council

⁴ Ibid., 56.

in 2013. The LWF Gender Justice Policy was adopted by the Council, meeting in Geneva in June 2013.

Definition

The LWF Gender Justice Policy outlines a set of principles and provides the basis for the communion to achieve gender justice.

Gender justice implies the protection and promotion of the dignity of women and men who, being created in the image of God, are co-responsible stewards of creation. Gender justice is expressed through

equality and balanced power relations between women and men and the elimination of the institutional, cultural and interpersonal systems of privilege and oppression that sustain discrimination.

Gender justice: The communion's vision

Liberated by God's grace, a communion in Christ living and working together for a just, peaceful and reconciled world.⁵

⁵ *LWF Strategy 2012–2017*, 9, at www.lutheranworld.org/content/core-lwf-documents



The communion is called to live and work in Christ to address injustices and oppression and to create transformed realities and communities of good life with gender just relations that nurture and lead to the flourishing of all human beings.

Being in communion entails sharing a spiritual journey, nurtured by the gospel of God's grace, and receiving and living out baptism and joining together in Holy Communion in God and in one another. To be in Christ implies that although our differences remain, they have diverse meanings: our differences are gifts—one is not better than the other. Difference does not lead to inequality.

The perspective of gender is relational and interacts with other social categories. An intersectional approach presupposes that certain aspects of identity are sources of discrimination that are related to one another; such categories as gender, race, ethnicity, age, disability and class are interrelated at the individual and structural levels. There are systems of inequality; these need to be analyzed separately although they

are connected in the axes of domination. Other tools too are helpful to address the realities of oppression according to race, class, caste and age, and it is in the interaction and at the intersection with gender issues that an organization can undertake initiatives leading to transformation.

Human relations and structures are oriented by systems and bodies which ensure that justice is done. Global and international bodies, such as the United Nations (UN), provide universal legal frameworks to regulate countries and groups of individuals. This way of conceptualizing justice in practice is recognized in this LWF Gender Justice Policy. Among faith-based organizations (FBOs) and churches the concept of justice interfaces with biblical and theological understandings. Justice is spelled out in biblical, prophetic and theological language. This understanding provides a critical approach to the context and intends to analyze reality with tools that are in dialogue with human rights perspectives and theological concepts.

The development of an LWF Gender Justice Policy, Principles

and Methodology is an effort to fulfill the above commitments in the area of gender justice and to empower women and men to ensure gender mainstreaming in all activities and structures.

Criteria: When determining criteria for gender justice, one of the central questions that needs to be posed is, What do people who are marginalized and discriminated against due to gender oppression need?

Some of the criteria listed below can be used as common indicators to measure general changes in attitudes or organizational structures regarding gender justice.

- **No harm approach:** any violence, loss of life or ability—as defined by the group without social and religious privilege
- **Define indicators:** equal participation of women and men (numbers); relevance of equal participation (quality)
- **Equal participation** in leadership and decision making—quantity and quality

- **Equal access** to and use of resources
- **Use of UN** and human rights standards and treaties.

In each context, specific pointers, facts, numbers, opinions or perceptions should be defined to indicate changes or progress in contextualized action plans for the implementation of the gender justice principles listed in this policy.

Goal

The LWF Gender Justice Policy seeks to provide political intentions and tools that contribute to fostering gender justice in order to achieve inclusive and sustainable communities and churches.

The LWF Gender Justice Policy is to serve as an instrument for the communion and its member churches, congregations, groups and organizations to achieve gender equality by implementing contextualized measures that promote justice and dignity.

Purpose: Why a Gender Justice Policy?

The intent is to generate creative impulses that contribute for instance to the transformation of social conditions, norms, values or power relations as well as new actions that help ensure gender justice. It is expected that the adoption of the LWF Gender Justice Policy will lead the member churches and the Communion Office to:

- **Recognize** the policy with its guidelines for implementation as a communion commitment to gender justice
- **Engage** in a participatory self-assessment of the assets for and challenges to the churches as they strive toward achieving gender justice
- **Analyze** the participation of women and men in the life of the church in terms of their presence at decision-making levels and their access to theological education and formation and to

address possible inequalities in these areas

- **Encourage** women and men to discuss and reflect on the roles they have traditionally been socialized to play, moving beyond the traditional culturally assigned tasks in the life of the church and society so that those with the skills and willingness to serve in other capacities enrich the dynamics in congregations and communities
- **Encourage** church leadership to discuss and reflect on the interpretations of the sacred texts that cast a different light on the meaning of the text and, if necessary, new interpretations when referring to women and men's roles and responsibilities. Church leaders have the opportunity to work with religious and secular leaders to support gender equality.

What is a policy for the LWF communion?

Policy is an expression of values, a vision that gives orientation and

direction to realize gender justice. It provides a framework of intentions.

There are different levels of political engagement within the communion. With regard to the member churches, the communion is structured in such a way that council and assembly decisions are based on mutual accompaniment and accountability.

The Constitution clearly states that the LWF is an instrument of its autonomous member churches and does not have any hierarchical authority.

With freedom comes responsibility. Therefore, Article III of the Constitution, Nature and Functions, states that the member churches “agree in the proclamation of the Word of God and are united in pulpit and altar fellowship.” Furthermore, the Lutheran World Federation,

further the united witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ ...

further worldwide among the member churches diaconic action, alleviation of human need, promotion of peace and human rights, social and economic justice, care for God's creation and sharing of resources;

further through cooperative study the self-understanding and the communion of member churches.⁶

A policy, then, would be one way in which the LWF expresses the member churches' united witness, their promotion of human rights and justice and their self-understanding. It is one way of expressing in more detail what it means to be in communion, at different levels or in distinct areas of responsibilities.

Council Resolutions

At its meeting in 2013, the Council voted

to adopt the LWF Gender Justice Policy [Principles] and its recommendations as a framework to orient the implementation of gender justice commitments at all levels of the communion;

⁶ At www.lutheranworld.org/content/core-lwf-documents

to receive the LWF Gender Justice Policy Methodology and recommend its implementation through the regional expressions and member churches with the expectation that the methodology be adapted to local contexts;

to request the General Secretary to report to the Council on the progress of the implementation of the LWF Gender Justice Policy in the Communion.

Levels of Responsibility

In line with the LWF Constitution, the following levels are implied in policy implementation:

Assembly, Council and Meeting of Officers

- **Will use** the policy to give general direction and organize the work of the Communion Office; the governance bodies are responsible for assessing the implications of the policies and decisions for women and men and ensuring that the organizational structure

and programmatic work are in line with the principles of gender justice.

The Communion Office, its programs and projects, as well as the LWF country programs

- **Should, wherever possible, apply the policy** to develop and evaluate work. Applying the policy to work includes commitment to increasing awareness and skills, providing accompaniment and facilitating processes leading to gender justice. Management is required to conduct systematic reviews of the institution's procedures and commitment to gender analysis, and to ensure

that adequate systems and measures are in place to promote gender equality and justice in its programmatic work and staffing.

Member churches

- **Ensure the implementation** of decisions and resolutions at assembly and council levels and support and accompany each other in exploring the contextualization of the gender policy in mutual accountability.

The autonomy of each member church in its context and reality is honored; member churches have embraced the option of walking together in mutual interdependency

and responsibility. This requires follow up as well as the adaptation and contextualization of these decisions and resolutions.

Regional expressions

- **Provide opportunities** to contextualize the LWF Gender Justice Policy through transcontextual dialogue and experiences.

Regions offer the platforms where mutual accompaniment and accountability can be articulated through agreed upon frameworks, tools and methodologies. They create the space to ensure that local approaches are enriched by transcontextual experiences.



LWF Gender Justice Policy Principles

The LWF is a communion of churches committed to:

- 1. Promote** gender justice as a theological foundation to proclaim dignity and justice for all human beings and to promote gender equality as a universally recognized human right
- 2. Uphold** values of dignity and justice, inclusiveness and participation, mutual accountability and transparency reflecting respect for all people's gifts
- 3. Apply** at regional and local levels the LWF assembly and council decisions regarding inclusiveness and gender and generational balance, ensuring the equal representation and participation of women and men at all levels in decision-making positions
- 4. Ensure** gender analysis in all humanitarian and development work and intentionally address gender equality in order to reinforce patterns of justice and inclusiveness. For this reason, it is essential to recognize and analyze the effects of all development processes on gender equality
- 5. Support** the empowerment of women as a key strategy toward ending the unequal distribution of wealth and conflict and preventing and responding to gender-based violence
- 6. Actively promote** the involvement of men reflecting on models of transformed masculinities engaged in gender justice
- 7. Address** systemic and structural practices that create barriers to the full participation of women in leadership and at levels of decision making
- 8. Ensure** that key organizational policies, systems, practices, budgets, human resource management, staffing, representation, training, management and decision-making bodies are gender balanced and support the equal participation of women and men
- 9. Ensure** that gender analysis is built into all programs and stages of project cycles: assessment, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation
- 10. Engage** all aspects of theology, liturgy and devotional life from the perspective of gender justice.



LWF Gender Justice Policy Methodology

The LWF Gender Justice Policy methodology orients the process of realizing gender justice.

The guidelines it provides for a pedagogical approach to the reflection on gender justice are based on the threefold methodology of **see**, **judge** and **act**, designed as an itinerary for contextualizing the policy commitments.

All expressions of the communion are encouraged to interact with this methodological approach,

adapting and bringing to their own contexts and languages these fundamental concepts.

- **See** means to observe and read each reality and context
- **Judge/discern** means to use biblical, theological and universally agreed upon human rights concepts to discern this reality and the main issues arising from the context

- **Act** means to practice. After reading and discerning the reality, actions to this specific context are agreed upon.

See: Where does the communion stand on the journey to inclusivity? This first part provides starting points for where we are in terms of women's participation and gender analysis. It tells the story of women's participation in the communion and how gender is becoming a theological

tool within it. The exercise of looking at the reality and carefully listening to the different voices in the communion regarding gender and obstacles particularly women have to face is also suggested as a first step in the implementation of this LWF Gender Justice Policy. A process of building gender awareness and policies never starts from a vacuum; rather it is built on the “knowledges” of different groups, communities and concerned individuals.

Judge/discern: Biblical and theological foundation. Why does gender justice matter to the Lutheran communion? In the communion, the Bible and the Lutheran tradition are the lenses through which gender is discussed from the perspective of faith. In the language of faith, gender equality is spelled out as gender justice. Justice is the starting point from which to discuss equal relations. Justice is a prophetic announcement and the basis upon which to bring about transformation and ensure the dignity of all. This biblical notion of justice permeates the theological

discussion and highlights this entire section. Fundamental theological concepts in Lutheran identity are analyzed through the lens of gender justice. From this dialogue emerges a theological approach to a gender justice policy.

Act: Implementation and contextualization. This third part outlines strategic principles and guidance for implementation. An itinerary for achieving gender justice is developed with seven points—an introduction to values and commitments followed by a list of strategies for implementation. The LWF Gender Justice Policy has been conceptualized as a participatory process to reflect and act on gender justice with the aim of having a vivid and lively policy that can be contextualized and used in different regions. With 142 member churches in seven geographical regions (Asia, Africa, Nordic, Eastern Europe, Western Europe, North America and Latin America and the Caribbean), the communion’s context is a highly complex one. One case in point is

the rich variety of languages experienced throughout the communion while the work of the Communion Office is carried out in English, French, German and Spanish. It is a challenge to express in writing this rich diversity and to articulate arguments in such a way that they become an invitation to continuing the dialogue and to engage with and be open to contextualization in the different realities. How do we structure a text so that it provokes further discussion and leads to transformation?

The LWF Gender Justice Policy is an invitation to engage in movements of change in relationships and structures in the church, society and life. In the understanding that life comes first, this methodological framework offers proposals for how to contextualize some of the principles defined in the policy. Therefore, starting by analyzing the reality into which one is inserted and asking questions and discerningly reading the context are initial steps followed by theological reflection in dialogue with human rights perspectives and critically

evaluative models of development, structures and cultural traditions. Analysis alone, however, does not suffice; what matters is practice, bringing concepts and values to life. Therefore, implementation and achievement are the expected and necessary final outcome and result.

Contextualizing the different cultures in which the communion is active remains a challenge. Even when culture is defined as the systems of knowledge, integrating behaviors, beliefs, values and symbols accepted and shared by a group of people, it is assumed that this notion is not static but dynamic. The process of contextualization, therefore, must take into account cultural components and dynamics. Each context will then define priorities to be implemented in this specific setting; one reality cannot dictate over the other and define what will be important; mutual learning and sharing will enrich concrete action in all spheres of church and society in achieving gender justice.

What transformation is this policy bringing about in the lives of the

people involved in reflection and action? is the principal question accompanying this process.

Last, but not least, celebrate! Celebrate the possibility of coming together and being able to discuss decisive changes in the life and theology of the church. Celebrate communion, celebrate togetherness. Praying and singing together,

God calls his people now to a new life, walking along together hand in hand; the new time is ripe for changing, the moment is now. Let's walk together no one can go alone! So, come and join! (Thuma Mina 221, *Deus chama a gente pra um momento novo*).

Where does the communion stand on its journey to inclusivity?

Women's leadership and participation

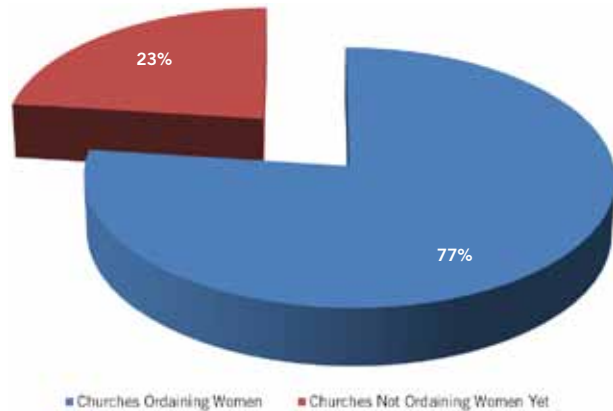
Over decades, the Lutheran World Federation has continued to act in accordance with its theological and

practical commitments to embrace inclusiveness as one of its core values.

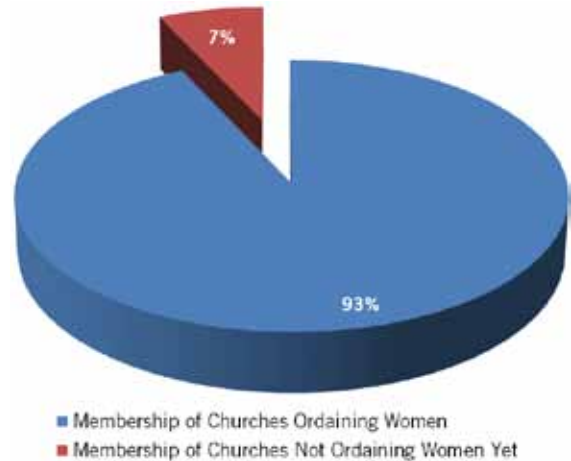
This can be seen in decisions taken in earlier times to ensure women's participation:

- In 1952, at the Second Assembly of the LWF at Hannover, Germany, a women's section was included and maintained as the Women's Commission, the forerunner to the first Advisory Committee to the Women's Desk, appointed in 1975. The decision to create a Women's Desk was taken in 1970 at the Fifth Assembly of the LWF at Evian, France.
- In 1984, landmark decisions on the participation of women and lay persons were made by the Seventh Assembly at Budapest, Hungary, which resolved to institute a "quota system" to ensure the participation at least forty percent women. The Eighth (Curitiba, 1990) and Ninth (Winnipeg, 2003) assemblies reaffirmed these commitments.

Percentage of LWF Member Churches Ordaining Women



Percentage of Members belonging to LWF Member Churches Ordaining Women



The right-hand pie chart reflects that the vast majority of the 70.5 million Lutherans in the communion belong to an LWF member church that ordains women.

- Assemblies and councils, the Communion Office’s main decision-making bodies, resolved that the gift of women in the ordained ministry is a distinctive practice to be pursued in the global communion. One aspect is the theological reflection and ecclesiological implications of integrating women in the ordained ministry. It shows how the church understands itself and bears

public witness to living and announcing the inclusive gospel. The participation of women in the ordained ministry is a vital, albeit not only, step toward building an inclusive communion. The full participation of women and men in decision-making bodies is another crucial step toward inclusiveness. The LWF embodies *ecclesia semper reformanda*, the notion of being in

an ongoing process of reformation in numerous ways.

Within the communion, many positive efforts have been made and changes taken on the basis of thoughtful and concerted decisions which support the full participation of women. For example, the quota system supports and advances shared leadership within the LWF’s institutional structures such as assemblies and councils. The use of

quotas is a structural mechanism designed to counteract the variety of practical obstacles women face as they strive to reach different levels and positions. Through LWF related women's groups, women and girls contribute to society's well-being by providing diaconal services to their neighbors. However, the church has not fully addressed the ways in which gender systems and relationships generate privilege for some and oppression and pain for others and thus affect our shared life in church and society.

While the quota system is one important tool to ensure the presence of women, frequently serious obstacles remain in the way of full participation. There seems to be a disconnect between decisions taken globally, at an assembly, and what happens locally. Simply fulfilling quotas is not sufficient. While quotas may ensure presence, they do not necessarily guarantee participation. In order to be faithful to previous assembly commitments and achieve the goal of full inclusivity, there is an urgent need to be transformed

as churches and as a global communion by the power that women and youth bring.

One of the landmarks in the life of the LWF communion was the prophetic voice articulated in *Churches Say "No" to Violence Against Women*,⁷ that confesses that violence exists within churches and discusses the measures that are being taken to combat such violence.

The work of churches and church-based organizations toward preventing and overcoming violence against women is based on an ethic of resistance to injustice. The churches' practice, diaconal work and theological reflection are part and parcel of the critical approach to faith and religion, which can help to dismantle the frequently dangerous connection between religion and culture that relegates women to the private sphere where violence most frequently occurs. The experience gained from the reflection on and implementation of the LWF action plan, *Churches*

⁷ At www.lutheranworld.org/content/resource-churches-say-no-violence-against-women-action-plan-churches

Say "No" to Violence Against Women, clearly shows that faith is a decisive element that needs to be considered in the attempt to overcome violence. One aspect of the Christian vocation is to call the thing what it actually is. It is therefore significant that the communion publicly declared that violence against women constitutes sin, and that churches are called to be a safe haven.

The communion on the way to gender justice

The LWF continues to develop the means to support and live out its commitment to achieve gender justice at the organizational and structural levels:

- In 1997, at the Ninth Assembly in Hong Kong, the commitment to gender equality was identified as one of the communion's core tasks: to speak on gender and power from a theologically and biblically based faith perspective as a justice and relational issue and to address gender and power as issues of leadership.

- The 2003 Tenth Assembly, at Winnipeg, Canada, focused on the numerous issues discussed and decision taken in previous years and explicitly reaffirmed the promotion of the full inclusion of women and youth in the lives of the church and society.
- The churches' diaconal experience has shown that theological reflection becomes relevant when associated with deep and passionate care for the neighbor. It is in their diaconal work that the churches position themselves in the public space, listening, seeing, touching, discerning and accompanying those who suffer and are being oppressed. In this dynamic movement of interacting with the public space and by offering insights out of the rich treasure of faith churches become citizens or own citizenship. Church citizenship is part of a theological identity; the way in which churches understand themselves as being part of God's eternal and permanent movement toward creation and all of humanity.



It is part of the missiological self-understanding of being sent into the world, offered first by God's gracious step of moving out of the realm of untouchability and with profound compassion entering into the world's joys and sufferings, pains and hope.

- It is with this understanding of diaconal mission that the LWF works toward promoting the full rights and equality of all human beings and, consequently, engages in promoting women's leadership and full participation. The experience of the diaconal approach to upholding the rights of the poor and oppressed provides the practical basis for the conceptual understanding of justice at all levels and in all relations, specifically in gender relations.
- In 2009, the process of reflection on gender and power was systematized and published in the document, *"It will not be so among you!" A Faith Reflection on Gender and Power*, that was

received by the Council. This is another example of theological reflection on gender analysis and provides the basis on which the development of the policy rests.

- Furthermore, the LWF, as a communion of churches, has based its commitment to adopting a gender justice policy on the experiences and engagement of the member churches in their work toward promoting human rights. The churches' and church organizations' gender policies are the basis for developing a communion-wide policy—it is a spiral movement. Experiences are collected and systematized at the communion level. The new formulation for the communion is based on these agreements and experiences.

Lessons learned from the initiatives and processes are that at all levels — member churches, offices, programs and projects—, the communion is challenged to reflect on a more comprehensive approach, grounded in theological concepts, of how to deal

with the ways in which these systems of privilege and oppression, based on a social and cultural construction, affect the presence of women in leadership. It is moving further and beyond the notion of bringing “women to the table” (presence) toward “equal conditions for women and men at the table” (full participation).

Biblical and theological foundation: Why does gender justice matter to the Lutheran communion?

To develop and adopt a gender justice policy in the LWF communion is part of the process of understanding holistic mission as an embodiment of God's grace in the world. Lutheran theology is rich in resources to deepen the communion's understanding of and mutual accountability to gender justice as an act of faith.

Contextuality is one of the hallmarks of Lutheran theology. Within the LWF, this implies ongoing, regional conversations. According to the LWF Strategy 2012–2017,

Communion relationships are interdependent. There are multiple centers of decision making and action. Being part of the communion helps empower member churches to participate and shape communion life through the networks that connect and bring them together regionally and globally. Their rich cultural diversity is to be celebrated and it provides opportunities of many kinds of shared encounter, mutual challenge, and mutual learning.⁸

Gender justice is an orientation point for these many centers and the dialogue between them.

The biblical image of equality and justice is presented at the beginning of this policy (p. 5) as the biblical foundation of the LWF communion's understanding of gender justice. Human beings are created in God's image—male and female: different, but equals. Women and men share the privilege of and are responsible for caring for all of God's creation.

Human beings depend on God and therefore serve one another.

Using gender tools to interpret the creation stories can lead to such critical questions as: How do men and women accept the primacy of God in relationship to all of humanity? How do women and men live to be God's partners in the ongoing work of creation? How can core biblical concepts of equal creation and equal stewardship be interpreted to promote partnership? What does stewardship of God's grace mean in your cultural context? What are the implications of stewardship for justice for women and men in your cultural context?

The following are some basic Lutheran theological starting points in light of which LWF member churches are encouraged to develop and share with each other their diverse engagements with gender justice. Such processes and dialogues will best occur in full collaboration between women and men.

The Holy Scripture: Dialogue between life and text

Why does the Bible matter? The Bible speaks to the world of God's grace. Luther reminded Christians that what is most important is God's promise of grace through Jesus Christ. Therefore, in the Lutheran tradition, a key question is, What carries Christ? In other words, how is God's grace manifested? This is illustrated in the gospel. When Jesus heals the crippled woman her full humanity is restored (Lk 13:10–17).

These ideas lead to such questions as, What does God's promise of grace mean for women and men? How might God's grace inform the reading and interpretation of biblical texts from a perspective of gender justice?

The art of interpreting the different messages of the Bible in interaction with today's contexts is called hermeneutics.

The Lutheran tradition is invited by its own best insights to be dynamic, self-critical, and open to the future. Its theological outlook is marked

⁸ Op. cit. (note 5), 9.



by recognition of dialectic tensions, which resist resolution because they illuminate different facets of life with God and in God's world.⁹

There is a distinctive body of teachings that Lutherans find helpful in the interpretation of the Holy Scripture. These include the affirmation that Christians are the priestly people, justification by grace through faith, the distinction of law and gospel, *solus Christus*, *sola gratia*, *sola fide*, *solo verbo* and a theology of the cross and the interpretive principle that Scripture interprets Scripture. As noted above, an important entry point, a hermeneutical key, is to read the text in light of the question, What carries Christ?

To read the Bible individually, or in groups, congregations and communities requires an active engagement with the text—both the historical context and that of the reality of life today. This diversity and richness of life experience is connected in the communal setting between life and

⁹ Ibid., 8.

the Bible. Therefore, language and cultural diversity in written, oral and verbal interpretations as well as reception and audience are elements that need to be taken into account in the exegesis of Scripture. Interpretation of the biblical text in a communal setting in resonance and dissonance with present practices and contextual situations will be enriched.

Within the Lutheran communion there are diverse ways of interpreting the Bible. Among them are the contextual or popular readings wherein context and community are the starting points for dialogue with the text. To help discern the tensions between law and gospel, critical tools are valuable elements with the intention of provoking changes in systems of injustice. This way of reading the Bible can be a light and strength for the empowerment of women and marginalized groups and the promotion of gender justice. Reading biblical texts from a contextualized perspective with marginalized people and groups is an empowerment exercise that articulates locally embodied and contextual theologies.

People begin to see their own daily struggles in connection with the biblical stories. The interaction with the text becomes a motivation to question injustices based on gender. The issue of gender justice has theological foundations in the biblical testimony and Christian tradition. While this theological and biblical tradition can be interpreted as affirming the cooperation between women and men in various aspects of leadership in the world, this conclusion is generally not fully lived out in the context of family, church and public space. Women tend to be overburdened with domestic responsibility, excluded from leadership in ministry and not encouraged to take leadership in the public arena.

Certain biblical texts and church traditions that buttress this marginalization of women may need to be reread in light of the general understanding of the equality of human beings before God, God's mandate for humanity in stewardship and the new identity through baptism.

The related hermeneutical or interpretative challenges are not easily

untangled because of the cultural contextualization that is not only experienced in contemporary society but also evident in the biblical texts and early Christian traditions themselves.

A contextual reading of biblical texts using gender analysis is a helpful methodology to make explicit the disparities among women and men in society and churches today. A critical reading facilitates the deconstruction of ideologies that perpetuate systems which privilege some and oppress others, as is the case in patriarchal structures. A critical reading aims at the active organization of women and men toward transformative and just relationships and an alternative socialization of boys and men, girls and women in partnership. These communitarian relations can be a vivid expression of incarnate justice and dignity.

- What does Scripture say about justice?
- Which biblical texts support gender justice?
- Which texts are contrary to and challenging a just and equitable

relationship among women and men?

- What meaning may/does God's grace have in reading all of these texts?

Justification and grace: Freedom and dignity for all human beings

- What does it feel like to be justified?
- What does it feel like to be an individual simultaneously justified and guilty?
- What are the consequences for individuals and the church itself to be simultaneously justified and guilty?

The theological approach proposed in this policy relies on justice as a fundamental concept embedded in the biblical-theological notion of being justified by faith through grace, which grounds Lutheran identity. To be justified is to be freed from that which binds us (cf. Rom 5).

This theological approach rooted in justification also recognizes that

humans are still oriented by hierarchical and unjust systems, often up to the point of being sustained by unjust laws; consequently, to live with the radical notion of being justified by God's grace is to be freed from meritocracy, or the fulfillment of the requirements of patriarchal traditions and values. Thus we are simultaneously justified and sinner—*simul iustus et peccator*. From a Lutheran perspective, this is the paradoxical state of being in which church and society always find themselves. Being guided by the impulse of grace is to affirm that women and men are empowered to resist and engage in actions of transformation.

Humanity is not only equal in creation, but also in sin. Paul states, "as it is written: 'There is no one who is righteous, not even one;' ... since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:10, 23). Although it is common to understand sin in terms of individual deeds or acts, communities and institutions also need to look into themselves.

Sin is harm done to others, to ourselves and to God. Laws, habits,

ideas, attitudes and policies can all be sinful if they harm any part of God's creation. Sin is therefore not only personal but also structural and institutional. Anything that places the value of one group of humans over another is sinful because devaluing others is harmful. In this sense, a system based on subordination and oppression, placing the value of males over that of females, is a sinful system. This understanding of a sinful system of oppression helps avoid oversimplifying the analysis. Living in a system implies that overcoming unjust structures is the responsibility of both women and men. Since a sinful system dehumanizes both women and men it is a shared task actively to engage in movements of change and transformation. Gender justice refers then to both, women and men, together organizing life based on partnership and justice.

Justification by faith and through God's grace changes the Christian's existence in the world and thereby provides the church the basis to address unjust systems. In the story of the workers in the vineyard

(Mt 20:1–16), God’s grace falls equally on all the workers because dignity is restored. Humanity is thus equal in redemption.

- What do you suppose changes in the lives of the workers because they are treated equally?
- What changes in a community because all are justified by God’s grace?

***God's incarnation:
Embodiment and justice***

- What connections do you see between God’s embodiment in Jesus Christ and justice?
- What connections do you see between human embodiment and justice?

God desired to share human life fully in the flesh of a human being. God meets human beings in Jesus Christ, who shows who God is: a God who wants to liberate people out of slavery, free them from the bondage of a fallen world, empower the poor and oppressed and invite all to lead lives



in freedom as children of God. This is the experience of the God “listening and coming down” to liberate the people who cry for help (Ex 2:24; 3:7).

Jesus Christ called his followers into a new paradigm of God’s family, one in which the male-ruled biological family systems were transformed (Mk 3:35). The human body, in all of its realities, sufferings and joy is at the center of Christian revelation because of God’s incarnation through Jesus Christ. Thus, through incarnation God establishes a deeper relationship with human beings. The divine Word assumes a human body and inhabits us (Jn 1:14). Empowered by the Holy Spirit, the body of Christ is a new, just community of sisters and brothers. This community, the church, is the body of Christ today (1 Cor 12:26–27).

The Holy Spirit empowers the church to make justice visible in the world. Justice is constitutive of the church’s identity. In the life of the church, humanity catches a glimpse of that which the church and the whole creation will be.

God’s grace creates the space for a liberating justice to unfold; therefore,

it is the church’s prophetic task to discern the form in which justice will take shape with all who suffer discrimination and violence. This moves and energizes the church actively to engage in justice in all relationships.

In your context, what images of God’s incarnation do you see?

- How do images of the incarnation of God relate to justice among women and men? (or, In what ways does God’s incarnation relate to justice among women and men?)

The sacraments: Free to serve at an inclusive and round table

- What kind of freedom does God promise in the sacraments?
- In celebrating Holy Communion, what images of diversity do you recognize in the body of Christ?

Through baptism, every person becomes part of the body of Christ (1 Cor 12). Everybody is important and gifted by the Holy Spirit with different gifts, abilities, capacities and skills.

Jesus shared the table with the excluded, the oppressed and those in need and by breaking bread with them he empowered them. Through bread and wine we share the same table and recognize that we are equal and that our communion depends only on God’s grace. In Jesus Christ all receive forgiveness and new life. Therefore, there is no reason to legitimate any form of supremacy, discrimination or oppression among women and men or among people and the environment. As Paul famously exhorted the church in Galatia and Corinth “... there is no longer male and female” (Gal 3:26–28; cf. 1 Cor 12:13).

Humankind, regardless of gender, biology or other conditions, is transformed in Jesus’ grace, forgiveness and new life. Differences of power based on ethnicity, class and gender are changed and transformed through baptism. All are one in Christ.

Paul further reminds the Galatians, “For freedom Christ has set us free” (Gal 5:1). The priesthood of all believers means that people are not only set free, but that they are also called by the Holy Spirit to care for freedom in

the reign of God. The freedom is to serve, create and live in an equitable community, to care for each other, share gifts and decision-making and to empower those excluded by systems of privilege and oppression. Gender justice is an expression of Christian freedom. With regard to the visible church, there is a shared responsibility between women and men to develop structures of participation, transparency and accountability, which are concrete elements in building gender justice in the lives of people and organizations.

- How do baptism and Eucharist anticipate and open up new ways of living?
- What practices of shared leadership can be developed in your context?

Ecclesiological pillars: Shared leadership and a discipleship of equals

- In what ways do you think that baptism influences leadership and discipleship?



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- How do we as church respond to contradictory texts about the leadership of women?

Through baptism, both women and men are restored to God. Both are fully accepted by God although we are sinners at the same time. In other words, there is unity of genders before God, both in our sinfulness and in justification. No one has any advantage before God as a result of gender. No one is justified before God due to what he or she has done or what he or she is, but only by God's grace.

This shared image and creativity is assumed in every aspect of human life, even there where the differentiation of roles is shaped by cultural influences. The subjugation of one gender by another does not fully cohere with the spirit of the creation tradition even though some have taken the reference of "a helper fit for him" (Gen 2:18) to imply the subordination of women to men, it could also refer to faithful mutual support because in other texts, the same word "helper" is used in reference to God. For example, "I lift up my eyes

to the hills. From where does my help (*ezer*) come? My help (*ezer*) comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth" (Ps 121:1–2). Here the word used for woman as man's helper is the same word as is used for God's dependability in Psalms 121. According to this understanding, helper is not understood in terms of subordination but dependable mutual support.

The instruction that women should be "silent in the churches" (1 Cor 14:34) cannot be read in isolation from other adjacent calls to silence. For example, if there is no one to interpret a tongue, let each of the tongue speakers "keep silent in church and speak to [themselves] and to God" (1 Cor 14:28).¹⁰ Also in the case of prophets, only one can speak at a time and if one has a revelation while the other is still speaking "let the first be silent" (1

¹⁰ Some research points to the fact that this text cannot be attributed to Paul, but it is an interpolation; it is an insertion to build a later argument of exclusion and silence for women. See, for example, several of Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza's publications.

Cor 14:30). So, in Corinthians, the silencing of women can be seen in the broader context of ordering worship even though the "law" or creation order are appealed to as a way of emphasizing this local concern. Paul's instruction that women be silent in the congregation's meetings is driven by context. It cannot be understood as a universal rule since Paul approves of women speaking publicly at these meetings (1 Cor 11:5). There is an evident tension between both texts, which clearly illustrates that, in biblical times as well as today, contextuality was and remains a key element in interpretation.

Clearly, due to the historical contexts in which they were written, New Testament texts do not unanimously support gender equality. Texts taking gender hierarchy for granted (e.g., the demand of submission of wives to their husbands in Eph 5:21–24; Col 3:18) should be critically reviewed in light of the teachings in the tradition of Jesus' sayings and Paul's letters.

Can we affirm that the exclusion of any gender from leadership is not

consistent with the Bible and tradition of the church? There were women ministers of God both in Old and New Testament times. There was “Miriam the prophetess” (Ex 15:20) who worked with Aaron and Moses. There was also Deborah, who was both a religious and political leader (Judg 4:4). The prophetess Anna confirmed Jesus’ messiahship and blessed him when he was dedicated in the temple (Lk 2:36). Jesus had many male and female disciples. Many of the female disciples took care of Jesus’ economic needs for example,

Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, and Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod’s household manager, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their means (Lk 8:2–3; also Mk 15:41).

Many of these women were the first witnesses to the resurrection (Lk 24:22; Jn 20:11–18). In Romans 16, many women are mentioned in different functions and ministries, including that of being Paul’s co-

workers, like Prisca (Rom 16:3), and apostles such as Junia (Rom 16:7). These women assumed roles of leadership in the Christian communities in the first centuries. In the history of the church, many women suffered persecution because of their unyielding witness to Christ (e.g., Perpetua and Felicitas).

The church mirrors social identities, prescriptions and culturally influenced interpretations of what “manhood” and “womanhood” mean. The church’s silence and inaction are acts of complicity. At its very heart, the church has so far unused theological assets that can promote the dignity and flourishing of every human being and result in changing practices that exclude women and some men on the basis of social and cultural norms.

- In what ways do we as church allow inconsistent biblical interpretations to influence and perpetuate negative cultural and social norms in church and society?
- Based on the biblical narratives, how and where do you see

practices of gender justice in the church context?

Guidelines and tools for contextualized action plans

Monitoring and accountability: The Communion Office will be responsible for the institutionalized follow up and monitoring regarding programmatic work. A progress review is to be submitted to the Council by the General Secretary.

This section of the LWF Gender Justice Policy provides practical tools and guidance to mainstream gender throughout the Lutheran communion. Some practical tools are suggested rather than prescribed. They can be used to promote the sharing of roles and responsibilities at all levels among leaders and groups in the member churches, as well as staff of the Communion Office and World Service country programs.

In order to achieve the goal of gender justice at all levels—as agreed in the *LWF Strategy 2012–2017*—the LWF is committed to



the values of dignity and justice for all, compassion and respect for diversity, inclusion and participation, transparency and accountability that underpin its work and mission.

A list of strategies for implementing gender justice is included below.

Contextual assessment

Discerning and naming different contexts is the first step undertaken in any theological, humanitarian or development intervention. In order to develop any policy as part of an organizational framework to guide the programmatic work, the methodological approach should be based on a careful listening to the life experiences of women and men, girls and boys, and the socioeconomic, political and cultural contexts that influence them. In this process of contextual assessment, it is crucial to acknowledge that in most of the world gender injustices are largely committed against women. Therefore, the emphasis needs to be on women's empowerment with men's partnership in order to achieve justice. Experiences are culturally

and socially constructed and often marked by unequal power relations. Explicitly naming and scrutinizing these power relations through gender analysis provides information to determine effective strategies in the contextual assessment.

Gender analysis is defined as:

- A tool to understand the disparities between women's and men's realities
- An examination of the differences leading to social, economic, political and religious inequalities and injustices
- A tool to identify the gender-based division of labor and definitions of women and men, taking into account the differences in social status, biological needs, economic situations and racial and/or gender identities, etc. as part of the process of achieving gender equity.

The intended outcome of a gender analysis is to transform unequal

power relations into just relations between women/girls and men/boys. Therefore there is a need to:

1. **Collect** and analyze sex-disaggregated quantitative and qualitative data to identify gender-based inequalities in both the private and public spheres
2. **Base** the design of interventions, projects and programs on the results of statistical analysis
3. **Use** tools of gender analyses and impact assessment to diagnose gender-based patterns of access to and control over resources and benefits to inform policy and management decisions that will eliminate inequality and promote actions of equality.

Participatory approach

Gender-based oppression needs to be addressed urgently. Dialogue that engages in and leads to reflection on gender issues and promotes change leading to gender justice practices challenging patriarchal and

non-inclusive values in the churches and societies should be encouraged.

Establishing new and strengthening existing partnerships are pivotal for dialogue and for change to occur. This conversation is crucial within and between communities, families, member churches, all expressions of the LWF and between expressions of the LWF and ecumenical organizations in order to address gender justice as a fundamental prerequisite for holistic mission.

At the practical level, participation is ensured through programs and projects and the work of member churches to:

1. **Provide** spaces and platforms to bring women and men together and/or separately to listen deeply, reflect carefully and understand each other regarding how they conceive and envision their reality and what they each experience
2. **Orient** work to build alliances and partnership between men and women, including tools and methodologies for conflict resolution

3. **Ensure** that the strategic interests and practical needs of women and men, girls and boys are equitably addressed in program and project cycles; and that both women and men are seen in their productive and reproductive roles.

Cross cutting gender justice

Declaring gender justice to be a cross cutting priority is primarily a political and strategic decision.¹¹ It implies that every process, structure, plan, program and project will be accountable to gender justice as well as to methodological shifts in planning, implementation, monitoring, reporting and evaluation of the entire organization's interventions. It also entails an intentional structural realignment where gender analysis is a key element in decision-making processes.

The official UN definition of gender mainstreaming is the definition included in the ECOSOC Agreed Conclusions 1997 where gender mainstreaming is defined as "the process of assessing the implications for women and men of

any planned action ... so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated."

The following are some steps to mainstream gender justice in the communion:

1. **Map** and take stock of programs and projects and review laws and other legal instruments, documents, human resource policies, language policies, etc. using gender justice as an analytical tool
2. **Define** gender sensitive indicators (quantitative and qualitative) to measure the benefit and impacts of programs and initiatives on men/boys and women/girls
3. **Define** focus persons or groups in the organization to be responsible for monitoring the process
4. **Promote** theological reflection on gender justice.

Capacity development

It is vital that women and men have equal opportunities fully to participate

in leadership and decision making. Equally, valuing women and men implies that the church works toward the sharing of obligations and responsibilities and to represent and embrace women's and men's equal status in church and society. In its values and practices, the church can and must act and set an example, thereby showing that its actions are coherent with its prophetic preaching.

This entails an organizational commitment to building and strengthening the capacities of men and women to enable and empower them to meet the objectives of gender justice practices. Various levels of capacity development should be considered, taking into account the diverse constituencies and communities.

Strategies for building capacities with a gender justice perspective:

1. **Raise** awareness regarding violence against women, domestic violence and gender based violence
2. **Focus** on men and reflect on models of masculinities to raise aware-

¹¹ Cf. *LWF Strategy*, op. cit. (note 5).

ness on gender issues and equal rights and thus, at the institutional level, view both women and men as engendered creatures

3. **Support** Bible study groups fostering dialogues about gender issues based on the Holy Scripture
4. **Integrate** gender justice into curricula and teaching programs of seminaries and theological institutions
5. **Develop** training at formal and non-formal levels for teachers, volunteers, humanitarian workers, pastors and church workers to empower them to be gender sensitive and to address gender injustice in church and society
6. **Motivate** and facilitate the access of women to theological studies to ensure the full integration of theological trained women in the ordained ministry of the church
7. **Utilize** media as a tool to sensitize to, and to address gender concerns.

8. **Develop** specific and targeted capacity building for young women leaders

9. **Elaborate** systems for mutual and continuous learning among staff members such as coaching and mentorship programs to empower women and men to view gender justice as a common concern

10. **Ensure** equal opportunities for women and men at all levels within the organizational structures.

Organizational arrangements

An inclusive LWF communion embodies diversity and unity. This means being intentional in developing strategies and implementing action plans which empower women and foster partnerships among diverse groups of men and women—lay and ordained, of various ages and cultures—leading toward altered forms of shared leadership in the church and other expressions of the communion.

Inclusive practices have ecclesiological implications for the communion: it is how the church wants to live out its prophetic task of transforming hierarchical and excluding structures by providing open and hospitable spaces for all God's people. Diversity and inclusivity are key components of a sustainable communion which finds its unity in Christ.

Assembly decisions affirm that measures should be taken and mechanisms created in churches that embrace the gifts of women in leadership and promote inclusivity in all structures of governance. Quotas are a structural mechanism designed to counteract the variety of practical obstacles that mostly women face to reach equal participation on the basis of equal qualification.

Embracing the full participation and equitable representation of women and men in leadership is a sign of the continuous reformation and transformation of the church. The ordination of women is one expression of this theological affirmation. Integrating women

in the ordained ministry serves as a foundation for building women's citizenship in ecclesial contexts and one vital step in implementing gender justice in the churches.

1. **Promote** behavioral change through dialogue and support to communities, church members, etc.
2. **Maintain** the standards and requirements of the Gender Equal Salary Certificate acquired in 2012 in the Communion Office
3. **Apply** the inclusive participation and representation in LWF staff, events, meetings, committees and groups according to the Eleventh Assembly Resolution on gender balance
4. **Ensure** that the LWF Staff Code of Conduct regarding Abuse of Power and Sexual Exploitation is adhered to by all staff without exception; promote the adaption of the Code of Conduct among member churches and related organizations

5. **Implement** a gender audit for organizations in the communion and partner organizations

6. **Ensure** that the organization's budgets, projects and programs are gender responsive

7. **Establish** a gender focal staff group in the organization (Communion Office, member churches and/or partner organizations) with designated responsibility to monitor and coordinate gender justice policy actions

8. **Ensure** equal participation in leadership and decision-making bodies.

Safe places and healing communities

Each act of gender-based violence injures the creation in God's image and violates the community of believers who are called to live in just relationships. Therefore, the silence needs to be broken. The church's prophetic role is to provide processes for healing and safe places

for victims and survivors in mutual collaboration with multiple partners in healing ministries. Holistic mission and ministry also mean that perpetrators of gender-based violence are held accountable. This implies that also men are part in gender discussions reflecting on how models of masculinities sustain violence and control.

Gender-based oppression and violence, no matter how normative, traditional, or widely accepted they are in various contexts, are crimes and sinful; gender-based oppression and violence stand in contradiction to the gospel.

Strategies for addressing gender-based violence as an issue of faith:

1. **Develop** new practices, laws and public policies which reflect the commitment to gender justice, in cases where the law, public policy, cultural, or ecclesiological practices are not in compliance with gender justice or do not exist
2. **Engage** in activities providing safe spaces to women, men,

girls and boys to prevent violence against women and gender-based violence, including emergencies, shelters and refugee camps situations

3. Promote and strengthen relationships, networks, and leadership with other ecumenical expressions, civil society organizations, relevant United Nations agencies, and also governments to promote gender justice

4. Integrate action suggested in the LWF action plan for the churches, *Churches Say No to Violence Against Women*, such as: support diaconal work, elaborate biblical and homiletic resources, make the church a safe place, work collaboratively with civil society and governmental organizations, among others.

Systems and mechanisms of mutual accountability

Mutual accountability and open communication go hand-in-hand. There where programs and institu-



tions regularly and clearly identify gender-based oppression transparent mutual accountability follows naturally. A commitment to mutual accountability among all expressions and persons within the LWF communion is necessary to guarantee that practices match theological principles and policies. Accountability principles, procedures and mechanisms should be accessible and transparent to both internal and external partners. Mutual accountability is rooted in the freedom of the Christian to serve the neighbor.

Every person has dignity and is entitled to rights and freedom in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Following Jesus' ministry, the church is commissioned to speak out in favor of the poor, oppressed, excluded and vulnerable. To advocate for and put into practice international human rights law is the way in which the churches can enhance their commitment to human dignity and to be the necessary agents of transformation in society. Human rights derive from human dignity. In countries where

people are living with violence and armed conflicts, the church should advocate for the respect of international humanitarian law; this also refers in particular to sexual and gender-based violence.

Ignoring or neglecting these different needs, interests and rights can have serious implications for the protection and survival of people facing an emergency or humanitarian crisis. The integration of gender issues from the outset of an emergency or disaster is fundamental to guarantee that the humanitarian assistance provided neither exacerbates the situation nor, inadvertently, puts people at risk but reaches the people to be served and has maximum positive impact.

Strategies encompass the following areas:

1. **Raise** awareness regarding legal provisions and relevant UN treaties (Universal Declaration of Human Rights; CEDAW, Yogyakarta principles, UN resolution 1325, Geneva Conventions and additional protocols); and regional instruments such as Belem do Pará

2. **Promote** a rights-based approach (RBA) in development

3. **Adopt** humanitarian principles and codes of conduct that underpin all interventions promoting human dignity and mitigating and/or preventing all forms of sexual exploitation and abuse of power and related this with gender justice approach

4. **Promote** emergencies training with gender approach

5. **Use** a "Do No Harm" approach in programming

6. **Create** opportunities for equal access to and use of resources in projects and programs.



Glossary

Gender refers to socially constructed differences in attributes and opportunities associated with being female or male and to the social interactions and relationships between women and men. Gender determines what is expected, allowed and valued in a woman or a man in a given context. In most societies, there are differences and inequalities between women and men in the roles and responsibilities assigned, activities undertaken, access to and control over resources, as well as in decision-making opportunities.

Gender analysis is a tool to understand the disparities between women and men's realities in any context. It is conscious that the same issue affects men and women differently and disproportionately and challenges the notion that everybody is affected by an issue in the same way regardless of their contexts.

Gender balance refers to equal representation and participation of men and women.

Gender disaggregated data: the qualitative analysis of sex-disaggregated statistical information.¹²

Gender- and sex-disaggregated data combined: The collection and differentiation of data and statistical information by gender to enable comparative gender analysis. Data collected and analyzed routinely

¹² www.actalliance.org/resources/policies-and-guidelines/gender/ACT%20Gender%20Policy%20approved%20by%20GB%2006%20Sept%202010.pdf

to understand the impact of the humanitarian responses on the total population.¹³

Gender equality means equal opportunities, rights and responsibilities for women and men, girls and boys. Equality does not mean that women and men are the same but that women's and men's opportunities, rights and responsibilities do not depend on whether they are born female or male. It implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration.

Gender equity is the means through which gender equality is reached. It refers to the fair treatment of women, girls, boys, and men according to their respective needs and perspectives. To ensure fairness, measures must often be available to compensate for historical and social disadvantages that prevent women

and men from otherwise operating on a level playing field.¹⁴

Gender identity refers to self-identification and one's own view of oneself and self-expression. It's about what is means to be a boy or girl, man or woman. It is also all of the attributes and characteristics that our culture expects to go along with belonging to one or the other of the sexes.¹⁵

Gender justice implies the protection and promotion of the dignity of women and men who, being created in the image of God, are co-responsible stewards of creation. Gender justice is expressed through equality and balanced power relations between women and men and the elimination of the institutional, cultural and interpersonal systems of privilege and oppression that sustain discrimination.

Gender mainstreaming: Gender mainstreaming is the process of ad-

ressing gender from the beginning to the end of any planned action.

It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design and implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women can benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality. (Based on 1997 UN Economic and Social Council, ECOSOC.)¹⁶

Gender sensitivity: The proper awareness of the different needs, roles and responsibilities of women and men in design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of policy and programmes in all spheres.¹⁷

Sex refers to the biologic differences between women and men. Sex

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ At www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/intergovernmentalmandates.htm

¹⁷ Act Alliance, op. cit. (note 12).

differences are about men's and women's bodies and their biological functions.¹⁸

Sex-disaggregated data: the quantitative statistical or numerical information on the difference between men, women, boys and girls.¹⁹

Women's empowerment is the process of transforming gender power relations, developing awareness of women's subordination and building their collective capacity to challenge it. For historical reasons of exclusion and discrimination, a specific focus on women's work and empowerment is still necessary to support efforts to realize women's individual and collective rights to participate as fully empowered agents of transformation in church and society. The process pays attention to the personal level by helping women to develop self-confidence. Self-esteem is a key element in empowering women actively to participate in decision-

making processes. The inclusion and empowerment of women are essential in order to form sustainable communities, churches and societies. Improving the status of women enhances their decision-making capacity and leadership at all levels and in all spheres of life.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

Further online gender policy resources

ACT

www.actalliance.org/resources/policies-and-guidelines/gender/ACT%20Gender%20Policy%20approved%20by%20GB%2006%20Sept%202010.pdf/view

APRODEV

www.aprodev.eu/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=69&Itemid=29&lang=en

CARE International

<http://gender.care2share.wikispaces.net/CARE+International+Gender+Policy>

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (ICRC):

www.ifrc.org/Global/Governance/Policies/gender-policy-en.pdf

International Labour Organisation (ILO)

www.ilo.org/public/english/region/asro/mdtmanila/training/unit1/harvrdfw.htm

National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA (NCCC)

www.ncccusa.org/pdfs/gender-4web.pdf

UN Habitat

<http://www.unhabitat.org/pubs/genderpolicy/role.htm>

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

<http://hrba.undp.sk/index.php/assessment-analysis-and-planning/gender-assessment/gender-checklist>

World Health

Organisation (WHO)

www.who.int/entity/gender/mainstreaming/Gender_Manual_Glossary.pdf



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