



Affirming Women's Human Rights

Resources for Faith-Based Organizations



THE
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A Communion
of Churches

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Contents

Foreword	1
Introduction	3
The Role of Religion in Human Rights: The Interface with Gender Justice Perspectives.....	5
The Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the CEDAW Convention.....	9
Capacity Development and Networking in Advocacy for Gender Justice	17
Shaping Family Law for Gender Justice: The Strength of CEDAW for Religious Actors	19
Promoting Gender Equality through Personal Status Law – The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land Model	21
The Universal Periodic Review (UPR).....	23
An Example of Using the UPR from the LWF in Mozambique – Engagement on Gender	29
Human Rights-Based Approach and Gender Integration	31
Faith and Feminism: Religious Voices Engaging with the UN to Advance Gender Equality	37
Theater of the Oppressed, a Tool to Spark Change and Embrace the CEDAW Convention.....	45
Annex: Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.....	58

Foreword

It has been very moving in recent years to listen to both men and women speaking at the feedback sessions of the Women's Human Rights Advocacy Training that the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) has been organizing since 2015 in partnership with the Church of Sweden, Finn Church Aid, Mission 21, and the World Council of Churches. These voices bear witness to the major problems related to gender justice: how poverty, human trafficking, conflict and forced migration disproportionately affect women in all regions and across all religious settings.

It is, however, violence against women in all its forms that is repeatedly mentioned as the most pervasive and detrimental expression of injustice across the more than 70 countries represented by participants in the training sessions. This gender-based violence ranges from the private sphere to the world of work, to governments that maintain discriminatory legislation, and

even involves the very moment of birth in families and cultures that still consider girls to be of less value than boys.

Unfortunately, it is also true that churches and faith-based organizations (FBOs) are part of the power dynamics that perpetuate oppression and violence against women. Far too often religion is misused to justify discrimination against women in patriarchal societies across the world. The United Nations human rights commitments, and the instruments and forums it has put in place to promote them, can help to make our churches and FBOs more inclusive, less discriminatory and more courageous in affirming women's dignity.

It is very encouraging to see in the feedback from the Women's Human Rights Advocacy Training that advocacy is by its nature collective, truly equipping and building capacity in our member churches and programs. The partnership with the organizations mentioned before is grounded in a common concern:

how can our faith inform our commitment to gender justice, and vice versa. This commitment is also helping us work together with other faiths and faith-based organizations, as well as with civil society.

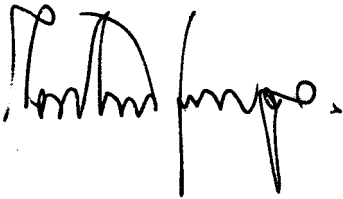
These Women's Human Rights Advocacy Resources and the sessions that shaped its content, are designed for FBOs. The aim of the work set out in these pages is not to advocate on behalf of our member churches but to build their capacity and equip them to be able to respond to these challenges in their specific local, regional and national situations. This publication gives some good concrete examples from a variety of contexts, of how change is being brought about in people's lives. The perspective draws on faith so as to impel religious leaders to forms of action and reflection which are not only rooted in legal and humanitarian principles, but also in values, beliefs and teachings that we find in our sacred texts and, for us in the LWF, in our *ethos* as Christians.

We are living in times of rising fundamentalism in both the religious and political arenas. This contributes to multiplying the layers of discrimination and violence experienced by women and girls across the globe. Millions of women are thus condemned to continue living as

second-class citizens. The voices gathered in this publication propose an alternative narrative, one which offers hope and concrete responses through interaction with United Nations and other civil society actors.

I commend this publication for wide dissemination in our member

churches and their congregations, as well as in our country programs, so as to continue equipping them to promote a message of hope and liberation – also by the way they take up and address violence that affects women and girls.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Martin Junge', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Rev. Dr Martin Junge
General Secretary, The Lutheran
World Federation

Introduction

María Cristina Rendón

The articles in this publication come from presentations at the Women's Human Rights Advocacy Training for FBOs and articulate both the religious aspect, grounded in theology, and the human rights dimension, with its standards and working methods. Appropriate use of UN Treaty Bodies' texts is an effective tool for the engagement of FBOs with women's human rights. Included here are presentations related to the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), and the action of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in the arena of gender. Short articles on gender integration using a human rights-based approach, and on taking up the challenge of faith and feminism are also included. These conclude with the experience of using the technique of the Theater of the Oppressed, originally developed by Augusto Boal, used here with wisdom by ParticipArte to raise awareness of gender stereotypes.

The expertise of staff from the Office for the High Commissioner for Human Rights, in particular from its Women's Human Rights and Gender Section, the Secretariat and the experts of the CEDAW Committee has provided a solid foundation for this capacity building effort.

The objective of this ongoing training is to increase knowledge of gender justice and women's human rights. It equips churches and FBOs to better understand and make contributions as civil society actors through the use of specific instruments of the United Nations (UN) designed to protect women and girls, and promote dignity and a world free of violence and discrimination.

In their pastoral, humanitarian and diaconal work, churches and FBOs have always been confronted with women's discrimination. As institutions grounded in local communities, they are called on to alleviate the harm caused by gender-based violence or customary harmful practices. Existing

inequalities further exacerbate the vulnerability of women and girls, especially at times when an unprecedented number of migrants across the world—258 million in 2017 compared to 173 million, almost half this number, in the year 2000¹—tend to absorb the available resources and energy of governmental and non-governmental actors.

It is our hope that religious leaders, lay and ordained women and men working in church contexts, as well as those engaged with FBOs in the humanitarian and development fields will find this publication useful. An online version will be updated with further material as the advocacy training continues in years ahead.

Gender justice is also a matter of faith. "Affirming women's human rights" needs to be translated into a willingness to make a difference, and to go beyond individual pastoral dimensions of injustice and engage in wider, more concerted and interconnected action for justice.

Partners

Since 2015, in partnership with four other organizations: Church of Sweden, Finn Church Aid, Mission 21 and the World Council of Churches, the LWF's Women in Church and Society program has developed and put in place training in women's human rights advocacy, specifically for faith-based organizations.



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Church of Sweden 



The Role of Religion in Human Rights: The Interface with Gender Justice Perspectives

Elaine Neuenfeldt

Engaging religious teachings and practices with human rights perspectives in constructive and fruitful dialogue is one of the key tasks of faith-based actors involved in human rights work.

Religious leaders have an important role in building bridges between faith and human rights, promoting transformative processes of social and cultural values, norms and beliefs.² Questions requiring careful attention include: What are the connecting points, what are the tensions? How do religious communities envisage the shared public space in a society where dignity and rights are ensured for all? What is the role of interreligious solidarity in promoting human rights? What are the implications of analyzing the human rights perspective and the interface with religion from a gender justice perspective? What are the roles of religion and faith in promoting human rights?

The Gender Justice Approach

The concept of gender justice is used in processes of mainstreaming and implementing gender equality in faith-based organizations or churches. Justice is a biblical and theological concept that unveils important issues and challenges in the church context:

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.³

Gender justice perspectives are useful tools for applying a critical approach to

the ways religion and faith are rooted in the patriarchal system of society. These instruments help to understand, confront and dismantle the hierarchical and sacred orders, where men have power over all things and people, as God has power over, determines limits and imposes “His” wishes, laws and orders, punishment and redemption. It organizes religious power based on hierarchy and a notion of power over others.

The churches' practice, diaconal work and theological reflection need to be part of these critical approaches 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 frequently occurs.

An example of this work is the LWF document, *Churches say 'NO' to Violence Against Women* in which

naming gender-based violence or violence against women in theological perspective is clearly defined. Giving violence against women its theological name – sin – brings the discussion to the sphere of faith, and helps build bridges between faith and human rights approaches.⁴

Women's Human Rights

It is important to articulate that women's rights are human rights, and that violence against women constitutes a human rights violation.

One of the fields where religion, faith or theology must be revisited is in the discussion on women's rights. One problem that is identified in building and affirming public policies to overcome violence against women has been the fundamental role of religious values. These values, from the Christian tradition, as expressed in sacred texts and Holy Scripture, continue to have a defining role in formatting of individual and social attitudes related to women.

A Christian theology deeply rooted in patriarchal values contin-

ues to be the rule in church practice, as in most of the theological traditions. This theology feeds and justifies a sacrificial logic making women's bodies a place of guilt and punishment. The result is a morality of accepting violence as atonement for sins and guilt. It seems that this vocabulary is a grammar common to the language of faith in terms of defining and describing women's experiences in religious traditions: guilt, punishment, sin, repentance, humility, etc...

No woman should ever be forced to choose between safety and her religious community or tradition. She should be able to access the resources of both community-based advocacy and shelter and faith-based support and counsel. For her to do so, she needs these two resources to work collaboratively so that they can provide consistent advocacy and support for victims and survivors and participate in the process of holding perpetrators accountable.⁵

In a challenging time when religion and faith leaders are becoming major actors in the public space, both positively and negatively, it is paramount to develop interfaith perspectives with the capacity to read the signs at the interface of religious, cultural and faith practices in different contexts. Feminist theology or faith reflections that use gender justice tools put women at the center of religious discourses and practices, as agents and producers of religious knowledge.

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)

Using religion at the focal point for interactions has positive implications for articulating reflections on faith, religion, women's experiences and gender perspectives in relation to CEDAW. I suggest using this approach with three articles in particular: Article 1 addressing discrimination; Article 5 focusing on the importance of states taking measures to modify social and

cultural patterns of conduct in view of the elimination of prejudices and customs and all other practices that are based on the idea of inferiority and superiority or stereotypical gender roles; and Article 16 addressing women's rights in marriage, childcare and family life.⁶

Using a critical perspective on gender in relation to the main issues of these articles, implies having to problematize issues such as the stereotyping of women exclusively as mothers and housewives, and how this limits opportunities to participate in public life. Other issues to be taken up are limited access over land, finances, or freedom of movement, or the use of different types of violence inside the house/in the context of patriarchal family struc-

tures, access to education, age and decisions related to marriage, having children, etc.⁷ All these aspects are, most of the time, related not only to cultural settings, but also to religion and/or faith perspectives.

This overview shows both the enormous importance for churches and faith-based organizations to advocate for women's human rights and the elimination of discrimination against women in wider society.

This is the public and prophetic role of theology. The way churches put this into practice helps to produce meaning and make sense in real life and in real lives. It helps women to stand up and walk their own ways. It helps women and men flourish in dignity and justice.

There is a clear need to encourage religious literacy, to help people understand how religious language is instrumentalized to justify exclusion and discrimination. There are some remarkable initiatives at the UN level that are moving in this direction. To mention two UN bodies which have efforts and reaching out collaboration, with a clear intention to bring women religious leaders to the table of conversations, as is UNFPA and UN WOMEN.

Women, Faith and Human Rights, (New York/Upsala, UNFPA/Church of Sweden, 2016). www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/WFHR.pdf [accessed 15 January 2019].



The "Broken Chair" on Place des Nations, Geneva. Photo: LWF

The Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the CEDAW Convention

Georgina Mendoza Solorio and María Cristina Rendón

What is CEDAW?

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW Convention) is a treaty that specifically addresses women's human rights. The UN General Assembly adopted the CEDAW Convention on 18 December 1979 and it is one of the most widely ratified international human rights conventions. To date it has been ratified by 189 countries.

The Structure of the CEDAW Convention

Part I (Articles 1–5) of the Convention focuses on the core obligations that seek to achieve genuine equality for women. These first articles seek REAL improvement of the position of women, going beyond the mere amendment

of the national laws and ensuring concrete implementation. (*See table on p. 10*)

What is the CEDAW Committee?

The CEDAW Committee is composed of a pool of experts in the field of women's human rights from different regions and backgrounds. The Committee, whose members are independent consultants, monitors state implementation of the CEDAW Convention through the reports submitted by state parties. "In order to ensure that it is as well informed as possible, the Committee invites representatives of national and international non-governmental organizations to provide country-specific information on states parties whose reports are before it."⁸

The Committee also considers input from specialized agencies and UN bodies that provide country-specific information. The Committee's recommendations or concluding observations after constructive dialogue with the state under review highlight the aspects that each state needs to improve in order to comply with CEDAW standards.

General Recommendations⁹

The Committee is entitled to make suggestions and general recommendations based on the examination of reports and information received from the state parties. These are based on specific articles, themes or issues under the Convention. Until 2018, thirty-seven general recommendations had been adopted by the Committee.

The Structure of the CEDAW Convention

Article 1	Definition of discrimination	Part I (Articles 1–5) focuses on the core obligations that seek to achieve genuine equality for women. These first articles lay the ground for the REAL improvement of the position of women, going beyond the mere amendments of the national laws and ensuring concrete implementation. Part I of the Convention focuses on prevailing gender relations and the persistence of gender-based stereotypes that lead to discriminatory practices against women.
Article 2	Policy measures to be undertaken to eliminate discrimination	
Article 3	Guarantees basic human rights and fundamental freedoms on an equal basis with men.	
Article 4	Temporary special measures to achieve equality	
Article 5	Sex roles and stereotyping	
Article 6	Trafficking and prostitution	Part II Articles cover issues related to public life, civil and political rights.
Article 7	Political and public life	
Article 8	Participation at the international level	
Article 9	Nationality	Part III Articles focus on economic and social rights.
Article 10	Equal rights in education	
Article 11	Employment	
Article 12	Healthcare and family planning	
Article 13	Economic and social benefits	
Article 14	Rural women	Part IV Articles focus on legal status of women, including within the family.
Article 15	Equality before the law	
Article 16	Marriage and family law	
Articles 17–22	Details the establishment and function of the CEDAW Committee	
Articles 23–30	Details the administration of the CEDAW Convention	

Some examples of general recommendations that focus on specific issues states must highlight in their reports include:

- General recommendation No. 13 on equal remuneration for work of equal value.
 - General recommendation No. 15 on women and AIDS.
 - General recommendation No. 21 on equality in marriage and family relations.
 - General recommendation No. 35, which updates GR 19 on violence against women.
- Although all GR are important to address specific rights, GR 35 is considered a ground-breaking document. It uses the term “gender-based violence against women”, which makes explicit the gendered causes and impacts of the violence. Going beyond GR 19, its predecessor, GR 35 states that the prohibition of gender-based violence against women has become a norm of international customary law. Other contributions of GR 35 include:
- It expands the understanding of what constitutes gender-based

violence against women to encompass forced sterilizations, forced abortion, forced pregnancy, criminalization of abortion, denial or delay of safe abortion and post-abortion care, forced continuation of pregnancy, abuse and mistreatment of women and girls seeking sexual and reproductive health information, goods and services as gender-based violence against women.

- Gender-based violence against women may amount to torture or cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment in certain circumstances, including in cases of rape, domestic violence or harmful practices. In certain cases, some forms of gender-based violence against women may also constitute international crimes.

CEDAW includes violence against women within the framework of inequality between women and men and as such is not considered a matter related to the private sphere.

Opportunities for Civil Society Engagement during the Reporting Cycle

The CEDAW Convention and the working methods of the Committee offer a unique opportunity for NGOs to get involved at different stages of the reporting cycle.¹⁰ States are encouraged to carry forward participatory processes at the national level, involving civil society organizations in the preparation of the report and in supporting the NGOs' work in disseminating the Convention and working towards its implementation.

The Committee has opened concrete spaces of engagement for NGOs, such as the possibility of sharing a list of issues that they consider key to be addressed during

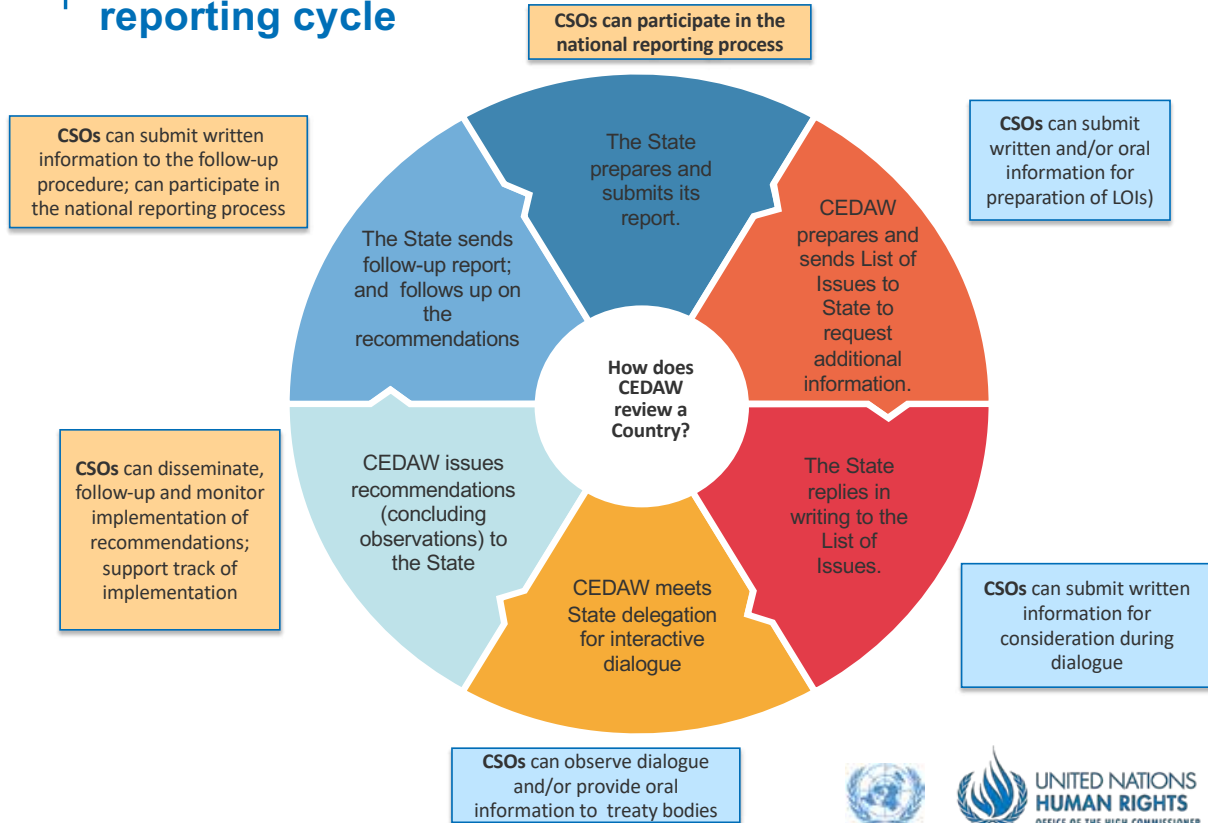
the state's review. This opportunity is given during the Pre-Sessional Working Group, a few months before the state's report is discussed. Informal meetings and briefings with members of the Committee in Geneva during the week the state's report is scheduled are also a powerful way of putting forward the specific challenges regarding women's human rights in a specific country.

Furthermore, NGOs are considered essential in providing alternative or shadow reports that complete and/or highlight gaps in the implementation of the Convention or the Committee's concluding observations. Their engagement can be indirect or direct, depending on the possibilities of implication with the process.

How the CEDAW Committee Functions:



Civil society engagement opportunities during the reporting cycle



Graphic published by UNHR



Indirect Engagement

Through their participation in the national processes of reporting and follow-up (via consultations held by the State Party).

Direct Engagement

Prior to review: By drafting written (alternative reports) and/or oral information to the Committee. There are two opportunities for this engagement: prior to the adoption of the List of Issues con-

sidered by the Committee and prior to the constructive dialogue with the State.

During review: By attending the oral briefing with the Committee; observe the constructive dialogue.

Following the review: By tracking and monitoring the **implementation of recommendations**; lobby for measures and advocacy; interaction and cooperation with other stakeholders such as the National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs), for example through public reporting.

The graphic on the opposite page illustrates the multiple opportunities of engagement of the CSOs with the Committee throughout the cycle.

Strengthening Shadow or Alternative Reports

The expression “shadow reports” refers to NGOs’ own reports after they have had access to the government’s report. State parties’ reports can be found on the OHCHR’s website¹¹ or by contacting the CEDAW secretariat.¹² “Alternative reports” are the NGOs’ reports prepared when the government’s report is not accessible or has not been submitted. Irrespective of the type, important aspects to consider when an NGO prepares a report include:

- It is important to consider the added value of working as a coalition. For a single organization, producing a report could be an arduous task. Coordinated efforts are likely to make the advocacy work more effective as it will represent the voices of large numbers of women. Furthermore, there will be a larger base for advocacy after the review. However, coordination among different actors requires time. It is therefore necessary to start the process several months before the state party’s review takes place.
- If available, study the government’s report and Concluding Observations issued by the CEDAW Committee after previous reviews of a given country.
- Decide whether the report will be articulated as a response to the government’s report or it would rather be based on selected articles in the CEDAW Convention.
- Organize the information according to articles.
- Highlight priority concerns!
- Use general recommendations and individual complaints jurisprudence.
- Identify major challenges/obstacles and make recommendations. These should be concrete, well connected with the opportunities and/or challenges in the national legislation.
- Address any reservations that the state party has regarding the Convention and its Optional Protocol.
- In countries where security for human rights defenders is an issue, make sure that the process of collecting data and drafting the report does not expose individuals to risks. Protect the identity of those at risk of being harassed or threatened.
- Avoid any abusive language in your report.
- Be clear and precise, accurate and objective and provide examples/evidence of alleged human rights violations.
- Include concrete recommendations to improve the human rights situation.
- Length of written submissions: 6,600 words for coalitions / 3,300 individual CSOs.



A father and son in Petén, Guatemala. Photo: LWF/C. Kästner

CEDAW Optional Protocol

Besides the CEDAW Convention, the states are called to ratify the Optional Protocol, by which a state recognizes the competence of CEDAW to receive and consider complaints from individuals or groups within its jurisdiction. Such complaints can only

be considered by the Committee if it concerns a country that has become party to the Optional Protocol.

Before a complaint is considered, the Committee must determine that all available domestic remedies have been exhausted and the complaint is not, nor has been, examined by

the Committee, nor has been or is currently being examined under another procedure of international investigation or settlement. In addition, a complaint will only be admissible provided the complaint is compatible with the provisions of the Convention; is not an abuse of the right to submit

a communication; the claimants' allegations can be substantiated, and the facts presented occurred after the state party ratified the Protocol.¹³

Under Article 8 of the Optional Protocol, the CEDAW Committee can launch an inquiry procedure if reliable information indicates that the rights in the Convention are being systematically violated by the state party. In such a case, the Committee invites the state party to cooperate in the examination of the information by submitting observations.

The Committee may, on the basis of the party's observations and other relevant information available to it, decide to designate one or more of its members to conduct an inquiry and report urgently to the Committee. Where warranted and with the consent of the state party concerned, an inquiry may include a visit to its territory. The findings of the member(s) are then examined by the Committee and transmitted to the state party together with any comments and recommendations.

The state party is requested to submit its own observations on the

Committee's findings, comments and recommendations within a specific time frame (usually six months) and, where invited by the Committee, to inform it of the measures taken in response to the inquiry.

The inquiry procedure is confidential and the cooperation of the state party shall be sought at all stages of the proceedings.¹⁴

The Committee has contributed to consolidating an understanding of women's human rights as a priority on the international agenda.

CEDAW a Tool for FBOs

Such a powerful tool as the CEDAW Convention can be appropriated by faith-based organizations – as an integral part of the civil society – to join platforms in each country that follow the CEDAW's reporting cycle and to use such coalitions to interact with governmental and non-governmental actors in the achievement of progress in areas impacting the lives of women and men.

Several of the organizers of the Women's Human Rights Advocacy

Training for FBOs have long-term experience in advocating and bringing to the global level the concerns of our partners in the regions. With regard to CEDAW, LWF member churches and country programs in Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Costa Rica and Nepal have been part of national coalitions, which have submitted shadow reports to the Committee since 2013. This effort has enabled them to raise awareness within the church sphere and beyond on issues of discrimination against women before the law, harmful practices and denial of rights to HIV-positive women, rights of migrant women, among others.



Representatives of the partner organizations of the Women's Human Rights Advocacy Training share institutional priorities regarding gender justice with participants in 2017. Photo: LWF/Peter Kenny

Capacity Development and Networking in Advocacy for Gender Justice

Josefina Hurtado Neira

In 2015, the Lutheran World Federation invited Mission 21 to participate in an advocacy workshop in Geneva. This opportunity not only introduced us into an ongoing ecumenical coalition, but also facilitated the strengthening and maintaining of key strategies in advocacy for women's Human Rights in the Women & Gender Program of Mission 21. Between 2016 and 2018, forty-five leaders working in development programs in Africa, Asia and Latin America participated in this advocacy program. Prior to their work together in Geneva, participants attended a four days' workshop on the issues of integral leadership, contextual theology and sustainability at the Mission 21 House in Basel, Switzerland.

Upon return to their countries, participants were asked to use the methodologies and contents from the workshop (above all, those

relating to contextual theology and to counter the alarming rise of fundamentalism), in order to put the methodology into practice in their own contexts, thus multiplying the training. The participants have since shared many examples of best practices in their own contexts, such as: participation in the Shadow Report to the UN Committee on Migrant Workers in Indonesia; the workshop "Towards a Strategy for Political Advocacy on Gender Justice for the Partner Organizations of Mission 21 in Latin America" in Peru; the workshop from the *Ekklesiyar yan'uwa*-EYN Female Theologians to Strengthen Skills Development of Women as Peace Builders in Church and Society in Yola, Nigeria; the workshop "Gender Based Violence (GBV) and HIV Prevention for Christian Women Leaders of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon

(PCC)"; and the "International Strategic Planning workshop on HIV and Gender-Based Violence" from the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon (PCC), in Cameroon.

The PCC workshop on gender-based violence and HIV prevention for women leaders is a good example of a success story.

The main objective of the workshop was to create safe spaces for conversations where women faced with issues of violence could freely express what was on their minds without being judged, while at the same time being able to seek justice. It dealt with core themes like contextual theology, sexual and reproductive health and rights, and the use of UN mechanisms, focusing on CEDAW. The methods and techniques used during the workshop were based on a participatory approach. A daily assessment during



Participants in group work during the Women's Human Rights Advocacy Training in 2018. Photo: LWF

the workshop made it possible to improve the quality of the training. An overall evaluation afterwards showed that the training was new to most of the participants and, therefore, responded to Christian women leaders' need to address the relationship between GBV and HIV prevention in safe spaces.

The follow-up reports reveal that after the training, the participants

were expected to organize sessions of education and were responsible for educating women in their respective groups and facilitating the creation of safe spaces for conversation and experience sharing.

As we shared in the evaluation of the most recent Advocacy Training in Geneva, a main challenge for our coalition is to guarantee the continuity of capacity development in advocacy

for women's human rights on every continent. We are already an international advocacy network which has been built up on the basis of mutual trust and solidarity. Everyone in their different roles and from each specific context can support the aim of achieving gender justice.

Shaping Family Law for Gender Justice: The Strength of CEDAW for Religious Actors

Joanna Lilja

While there have been positive developments over the last decades with an increased number of countries seeking to ensure gender equality in national constitutions and secular legislation, discriminatory legislation continues to keep women and societies from reaching their full potential. Family law is one area of legislation that is crucial for the fulfilment of women's rights. It regulates matters such as women's legal status before, during or after marriage, the legal age of marriage, domestic violence, marital rape, custody of children, inheritance as well as ownership of land and property. It covers several rights set out in the CEDAW convention, particularly in article 9 on nationality, article 15 on equality before the law and article 16 on marriage and family relations, and is further developed in the CEDAW Committee general recommendation No 21.

In some countries, secular family legislation is heavily influenced by religious norms and actors. This may for instance occur through consultation in legislative processes, strong public opinion or political pressure. Religious leaders have considerable influence over legislation regulating sexual reproductive health and rights in many parts of the world.

Faith actors can play a crucial role through advocacy in their own religious communities to promote legislative change as well as through shadow reporting to the CEDAW committee regarding discriminatory religious legislation and examples of how to change it. The work done by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land to adopt a gender equal family law and to promote a unified family law for all churches in Palestine, based on the same principles, is a great example

of how a church can take the lead in the pursuit for women's rights.

Family law is an area of engagement in which faith actors can also play a major role, as religious authorities tend to have significant influence or direct power over this kind of legislation. Many countries recognize parallel religious authority over marriage and family matters through religious family law as well as through religious court jurisdiction over such matters. This means for instance that religious leaders and institutions in India, Palestine and Lebanon have direct power over issues such as the rights and responsibilities of husband and wife in marriage, whether a victim of domestic violence can file for divorce, and whether men and women have equal rights to own and inherit property.



Dr Azza Karam, Senior advisor on social and cultural development at UNFPA and chair of the UN Inter-Agency Task Force on Religion and Development, moderates an inter-religious panel on FBOs' role in the agenda 2030 during the Commission on the Status of Women in 2018. Photo: LWF

Promoting Gender Equality through Personal Status Law – The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land Model

Scarlet Bishara and Joanna Lilja

Religious family laws, also known as personal status laws, are among the most challenging obstacles to the advancement of women's rights and to equality between men and women in the Middle East. Although there are differences between religious groups and denominations, the religious family laws in the Middle East in general discriminate against women in all matters related to marriage, divorce and child custody.

This is also true for family laws in Palestine. The Palestinian legal system allows for several parallel religious family laws. For instance, the Christian community is governed by parallel laws, as each church has its own family law that governs its members, as well as its own court process through which such matters are solved. In the CEDAW committee's Concluding observations on the initial report of the State of Palestine

2018, the committee recommends the State of Palestine to: "Review all personal status laws with a view to repealing or amending all provisions that discriminate against women and girls, in particular those relating to marriage, divorce, inheritance and the legal capacity of women, and in that regard, address family status matters by taking into account the best practices of countries with similar cultural background."

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL) is a Lutheran church that consists of six congregations and several ministries including four schools, an elderly care program and a cultural centre, to mention a few. In 2013, a long process of creating a family law and setting up a new court, was initiated. The process began after the Women's Committee of the church wrote a letter to the bishop, asking for the implementation

of the LWF *Gender Justice Policy*¹⁵ in the church and the creation of a Lutheran family law, based on gender justice. The bishop took the letter seriously and appointed a committee of lawyers to draft a family law for the church.

In 2015, after two years of deliberations and theological discussions, the ELCJHL adopted the Lutheran Family Law and created the Ecclesiastical Church Court. It is the only religious family law and ecclesiastical court in the Middle East that incorporates gender justice as a core principle and it addresses many of the issues that the CEDAW committee commented upon in its Concluding observations. The law gives for instance equal rights to men and women in regard to marriage, divorce and inheritance. The law also provides for equal rights and duties between husbands and wives



Photo: LWF/M. Renaux

in alimony and custody of children. The minimum age of marriage is set at 18 years, to ensure freedom of marriage and the elimination of child marriages.

The ELCJHL is now engaging with the other churches in Palestine and with the Palestinian Authority

regarding the possibilities of creating a unified gender equal family law for all churches in Palestine, based on human rights and the CEDAW. The Lutheran family law in Palestine is an example of how religious policy and legislation can promote women's rights and compliance with CEDAW.

The Universal Periodic Review

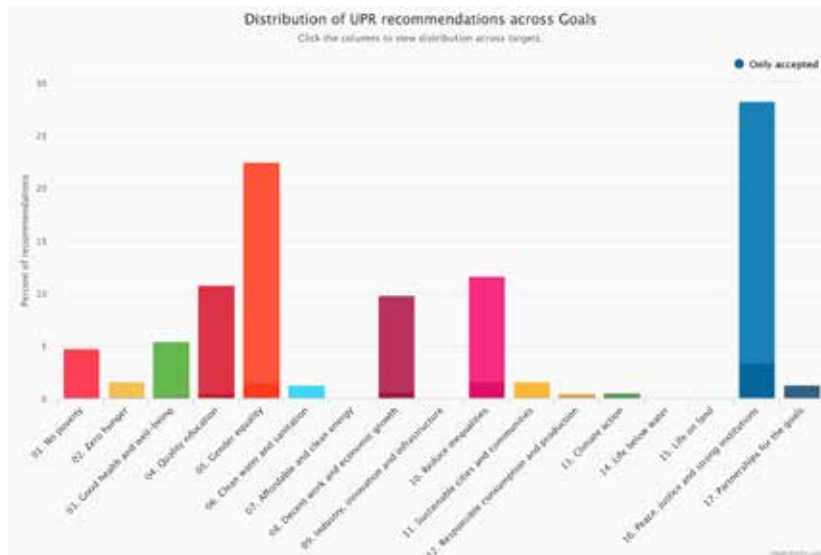
Ojot Miru Ojulu

The Women's Human Rights Advocacy Training emphasizes the use of the CEDAW as a key mechanism to raise women's human rights concerns. Including the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) mechanism has also proven to be important as it completes the methodology of the CEDAW in a meaningful way and can

only enhance its potential. This is due to its universality, to the fact that the recommendations to the country under review emerge from other states, and the way it also mobilizes the resources of civil society.

As reported by the Danish Institute of Human Rights in the graphic below, recommendations

concerning gender justice and the empowerment of women and girls (Sustainable Development Goal 5) represent the second largest area in the UPR mechanism so far. Therefore, if faith-based organizations and other CSOs can strategize around the UPR reviews of their countries, a large number of issues regarding gender-based discrimination can be addressed in the recommendations to the state party.



Source of graphic: upr.humanrights.dk/goals

What is the Universal Periodic Review?

UPR is the mechanism through which the Human Rights Council (HRC) assesses the human rights situation in each UN member state. It is a peer review process, an interactive dialogue on human rights between the state under review (SuR), the UPR working group and other UN member states, including observer states.

According to HRC resolution 5/1 UPR Objective 1 can be summarized as follows:

- Improvement of the human rights situation on the ground.
- Fulfillment of the state's human rights obligations and commitments and assessment of positive developments and challenges faced by the state.
- Enhancement of the state's capacity and of technical assistance, in consultation with, and with the consent of, the state concerned.
- Sharing of best practice among states and other stakeholders.
- Support for cooperation in the promotion and protection of human rights.
- Encouragement of full cooperation and engagement with the

HRC, other human rights bodies and the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

How does the UPR work?

The UPR working group meets three times throughout the year for about 10 days. The members of the UPR working group are the same as the members of the Human Rights Council and for each review a troika (a group of three countries that act as rapporteurs) is formed to facilitate each review. Each time the UPR working group meets, 14 UN countries are reviewed. In other words, a total of 42 countries are reviewed annually.

What human rights obligations are addressed?

- The Charter of the United Nations.
- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
- Human rights instruments to which the state is party (human rights treaties ratified by the state concerned) such as the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Convention on the Rights of the Child, etc.
- Voluntary pledges and commitments made by the state; (including those undertaken when presenting the candidature for election to the HRC).
- Applicable international humanitarian law.

How does the UPR differ from UN Treaty Bodies?

UPR	Treaty Bodies
Covers all UN member states	Cover only states that have ratified respective treaties
Cover all human rights	Thematic specific
Member states driven	Composed of independent experts
Voluntary	Legally binding

UPR reports

The review of the state is based on three main documents:

- a) State report: a 20-page national report prepared by the state under review on the country's human rights situation.

NGO engagement before the review

1 year before	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in national consultation with the state under review (SuR) for drafting of the SuR National Report.
8–6 months before	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submit a report (five pages for an individual NGO or ten pages for a coalition) on the SuR's human rights situation!
3–2 months before	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lobby states to ensure that issues/recommendations are raised/made during the review.

- b) UN bodies reports: a compilation of 10 pages prepared by the OHCHR containing information from treaty bodies, special procedures and UN agencies such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), etc.
- c) NGO reports: a 10-page summary prepared by the OHCHR containing information submitted by civil society.

NGO engagement before the review

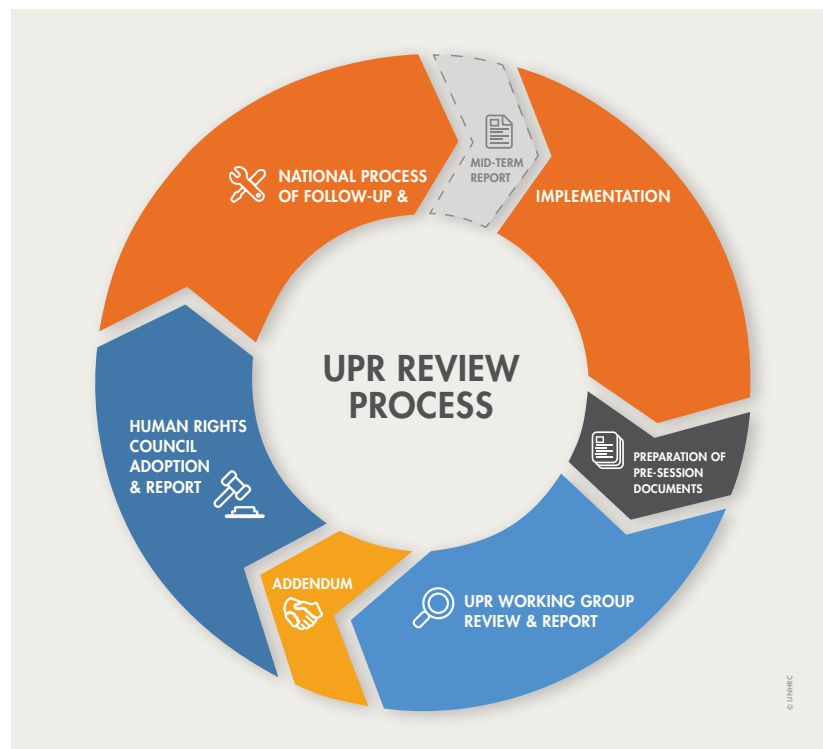
The report should detail how the state has fulfilled its human rights obligations and commitments, including achievements, best practices, challenges and limitations. States are encouraged to meet with civil society to gather information for the report, which is a good opportunity for faith-based organizations to engage in the process.

Some considerations when drafting a report as an NGO:

- All UPR reports are public.

- Maximum length of NGO submissions: 2,815 words (approx. 5 pages) from an individual NGO and 5,630 words (approx. 10 pages) for a joint submission.
- NGO submissions should respect the OHCHR's technical guidelines, for example use UN official language, terminology, and avoid abusive language.
- Respect submission deadlines.
- Anyone wishing to submit a report in a coalition with other NGOs, form the coalition around shared human rights interests, such as women's rights, the right to health, education, etc.
- Draft a general statement defining the situation and identify key issues (2–5 issues) to raise in the report.
- Make reference to international and national standards.
- Check whether recommendations were made on this issue during the first cycle review. How is the follow up on their implementation?
- Factual: provide facts and supporting information on the cur-

The UPR cycle



Source of graphic: www.worldcoalition.org

- Limit the use of second-hand information.
- Identify strong, action-oriented recommendations.
- Audience specific: the recommendation should specify which

- actor (which ministry, for example) should be responsible for implementing the change. Remember that the government is the primary audience.
- Evidence based: the report should clearly show why such action is necessary. The recom-

mendation should address an evidence-based problem that is outlined in the report.

- Specific: ensure that you are calling for specific action in the recommendation. A general recommendation is very difficult to implement.
- Time-bound: in the recommendation specify a timetable for implementation.
- Achievable: ask yourself if the SuR has the capacity (financial, human, technology, etc.) to implement the recommendation.
- Lobby other states to incorporate your issues and smart recommendations into their statements.
- Coordinate with other NGOs.
- Link the UPR to other human rights mechanisms (e.g. CEDAW). Treaty bodies may have issued recommendations regarding the issues highlighted in your report.

NGO engagement during the review

- Lobby friendly states to ask questions or to make a recommenda-



UN Geneva Human Rights and Alliance of Civilizations Room. Photo: LWF/C. Kästner

tion (one to two months before the event).

- Prepare advocacy factsheets: short explanation of each priority issue.
- For organizations based in or with partners in Geneva, hold a debriefing side event, a press conference or release a press statement.
- Organize a national viewing of the live broadcast of the UPR session.

Final adoption of the UPR report

The outcome document is officially adopted at the next regular session of the HCR (approximately four months later). The official adoption takes about one hour, during which the country under review can make statements and respond to questions and recommendations and UN members can make statements about the outcome documents.

NGOs are also given the opportunity to make general comments.

NGO engagement during final adoption

- Identify gate-keepers in the State under Review.
- Lobby governments to make voluntary commitments and to accept noted recommendations.
- Make written/oral statements.



Participants at the Women's Human Rights Training at the United Nations during the 70th CEDAW session. Photo: LWF

- Organize parallel events.
- Monitor the implementation.
- Engage in dialogue with the state reviewed for implementation of the recommendations.

Follow-up activities

- Make accepted recommendations and voluntary commitments public.

An Example of Using the UPR from the LWF in Mozambique – Engagement on Gender

Nordine Ferrao and Ophélie Schnoebelen

The LWF and its partners have been engaging in UPR in Mozambique since 2015, when Mozambique was reviewed for the second time. The process of drafting the alternative report started with the creation of a national coalition on UPR and human rights, in which the LWF was very active. NGOs focusing on gender justice joined the coalition and some were part of the steering committee, like the Youth Coalition (Coalizão da Juventude), that works on girls' sexual and reproductive rights and AMPDC (Women's Community Development Association), based in Sofala Province, coordinating the process in the central area of Mozambique.

In the communities' consultation process, the methodology the focus group used made it possible to hear the women's silenced voices. Concerns like child marriage and

women's access to land were taken up in the alternative report and also raised at the international level through the participation of AMPDC in the pre-session and their lobbying of diplomatic missions on these issues. Thanks to the advocacy led by LWF at the international level with the delegation of partners from the Mozambique UPR Civil Society Platform, the Mozambican government accepted recommendations both on access to land and on preventing and eradicating child marriage.

As a result, engaging state authorities at national and local levels on these issues has been much easier. For example, AMPDC approached the higher district authorities in Chibabava and Buzi, using the UPR recommendations accepted by the government on early child marriage. In this way, it was possible to build a relationship with the

district government and now the District Services of Health, Women and Social Welfare (SDSMAS) are involved in their campaign against child marriage. In spite of their financial constraints, state authorities instructed their officials to lead the awareness sessions and support the reintegration of girls in schools after denouncement of cases of child marriage.

Another achievement is that AMPDC was able to establish Girls' Clubs as part of their campaign against child marriage. These clubs also have the participation of boys and they focus on girls and boys teaching their parents and communities to write and read. The model used is the National Education System called PROFASA (Family without Illiteracy), where children in eighth grade are the ones who drive the changes. The implementation



A girl initiating parents in reading and writing skills. Photo: N. Ferrao/Justa Paz Mozambique

of PROFASA is possible thanks to clearance by the District Services of Education, Technology and Youth, a result of a previous engagement on the UPR recommendations accepted by the government. Using PROFASA has proved to be an effective way to fight early child marriage

because as illiteracy rates reduce, parents and communities understand the importance of education.

Those cases at local level are being documented and are going to be linked to the next CEDAW review of Mozambique and are reported back to the Civil Society Steering

Committee on UPR. These linkages are also possible due to the Gender Advocacy Training held in Geneva that showed how to connect the local, national and international level advocacy on gender justice.

Human Rights-Based Approach and Gender Integration

Veronica Birga

What is a human rights-based approach?

According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948, the equal and inalienable rights of all human beings provide the foundation for freedom, justice and peace in the world. The human rights-based approach (HRBA) is based on such universal values as freedom, equality and solidarity, reflected in human rights principles that provide a common standard of achievement for all: women, men and children.

A human rights-based gender analysis is a tool to understand how gender interacts both positively and negatively with the enjoyment of human rights and provides measures to protect and promote human rights for all.

The HRBA focuses on the marginalized, excluded or discriminated against, including children, minorities and women. This often requires an analysis of gender norms, discriminatory practices and power imbalances (including between women and men) to ensure that interventions reach the most marginalized sections of the population and that the root causes of human rights violations and the challenges in human development are fully addressed.

HRBA and gender mainstreaming are the right thing to do, both morally and legally. The objective of advocacy is the realization of human rights processes and the results of efforts in this area need to be sustained by human rights principles such as equality, non-discrimination, participation and accountability.

The HRBA offers the potential to shape relationships between

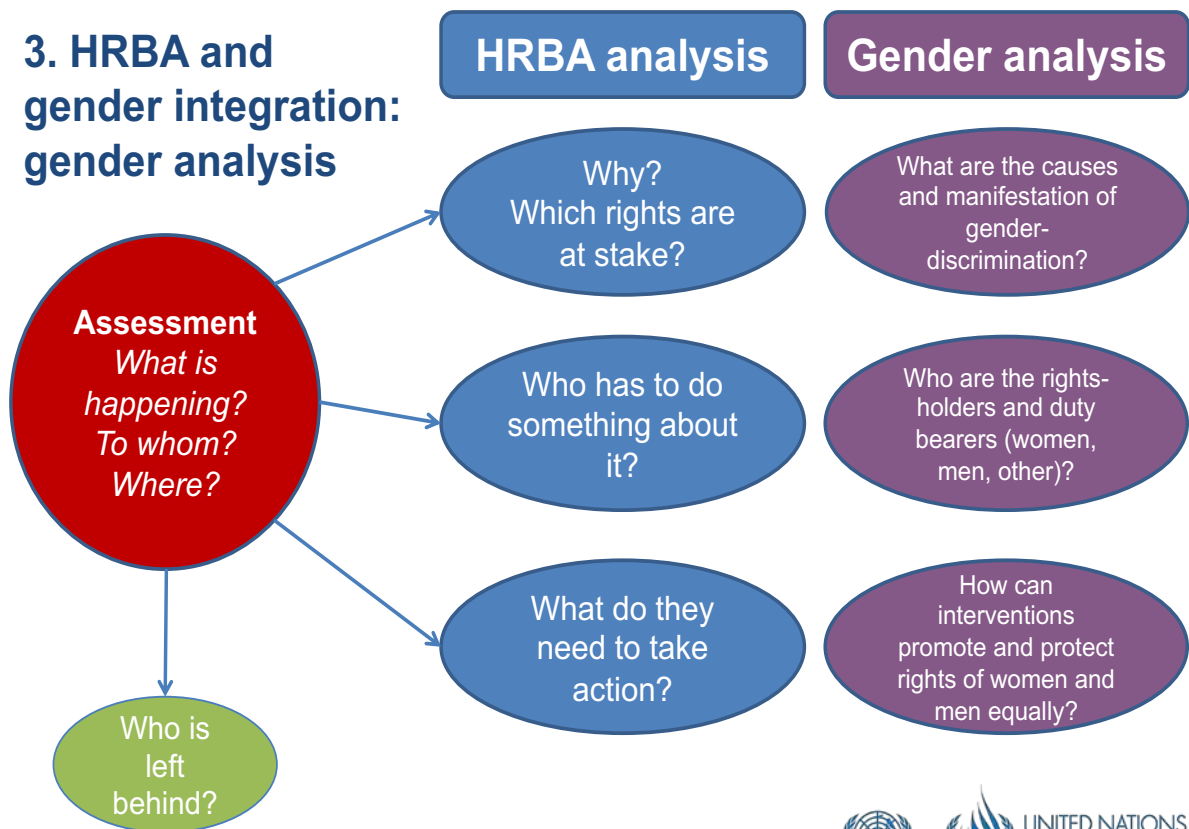
partners, since partnership is understood as participatory, inclusive and based on mutual respect in accordance with human rights and gender equality principles.

Why is gender integration central to the HRBA?

The twin principles of non-discrimination and equality call for a focus on gender equality and the engagement with women's human rights in all development programs. Equality, non-discrimination and participation as core guiding principles in the HRBA are to be seen in contexts where women frequently experience discrimination and are excluded from decision-making spheres.

While the universality of human rights applies equally to men and women, it is crucial to take the following elements into consideration in order to adopt a "gender lens" so

3. HRBA and gender integration: gender analysis



Graphic published by UNHR



that the HRBA fully meets the specific needs and potential of a given population:

- Distinguishing between fulfilling the rights of people and addressing the needs of beneficiaries is key. “Unfulfilled need leads to

dissatisfaction, while a right that is not respected leads to a violation. Redress or reparation can be legally and legitimately claimed.”¹⁶

- The HRBA seeks to reinforce the capacities of right holders (through the reinforcement of civil society organizations), so that they are fully aware of their rights and find ways to participate in decisions that affect them. The HRBA approach emphasizes participation, particularly of discriminated and excluded groups, at every stage of the programming process.
- Equally, reinforcing capacity is crucial in order to increase the accountability of duty bearers (usually governments) and to develop the ability, the resources and the political will to respect, protect and guarantee these rights.

Gender analysis: a key tool to HRBA

It is extremely important to perceive that we live in societies that are permeated by gender differences and gender inequalities. There is no country in which

the outcomes of public policy are equal for men and women, but the dimensions of these inequalities are often so deeply embedded that they are difficult to perceive. Gender analysis reveals these differences and the fact that in a social context any gender interventions that profess to be gender-neutral will in fact reflect and probably reinforce the imbalances that exist.¹⁷

The following are concrete strategies to ensure that the root causes of a given situation are understood and that the different stakeholders, duty bearers and the group or the population concerned can effectively achieve the desired change:

- Collect data disaggregated by sex and other categories (age, ethnic or social group whenever relevant).
- Where gender-specific information is not available, explicitly acknowledge the gap.
- Collect data using various research methodologies.
- Request information from governmental institutions.

- Conduct legal research to identify areas of discrimination or areas where women may not be adequately protected.
- Carry out interviews and surveys in communities (including with women alone).
- Make lists and create diagrams of NGOs, Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRD).

The graphic on page 32 illustrates the interaction and complementarity between an HRBA analysis in dialogue with a gender analysis and the necessity to undertake an assessment that goes deeper into the analysis of the structures and stakeholders that either have the potential for change or pose an obstacle in a given context.

Gender analysis is an integral part of the HRBA. It is a tool that helps us to examine questions from a gender perspective. Given issues are analyzed in the following, simplified steps:

- How does a specific human rights problem affect women, men, girls, boys and others dif-

ferently? Why do such differences exist? What are the root causes?

- Do women, men, girls, boys and others tend to be more exposed to particular types of human rights violations?
- Are human rights violations in the private sphere monitored? How do such violations affect women, girls, men, boys and others differently?
- Do female and male rights holders have different coping mechanisms and access to protective measures and remedies?
- How should the measures be tailored to protect and promote the rights of women, men, girls, boys and others equally?

Human rights mechanisms and gender analysis

In terms of the analysis of and strategic response to development problems, the HRBA with a gender mainstreaming focus is sustained by the recommendations of international human rights. All human rights instruments, not only the Conven-

Types of Violations

Gender-specific violations
(e.g. femicide)

Violations with
differentiated impact on
women and men
(e.g. arbitrary detention)



Types of Measures

Gender-specific
interventions

Gender-integrated
interventions

tion on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), include provisions related to gender equality.

It is important to carefully study the human rights mechanisms. Looking at examples from the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), or the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) report on maternal mortality and morbidity it's possible to see that the challenges assessed are connected to issues related to the imbalanced access to resources and gender-based violence or cultural/

customary beliefs having a differentiated impact on women and men.

Specific situations are addressed in CEDAW recommendations, the concluding observations of the Human Rights Council, the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) recommendations, as well as the recommendations by other mechanisms (Indigenous Peoples, Internally Displaced People [IDPs], Working Group on Discrimination Against women in Law and Practice [WGDAW], Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women [SRVAW].)

Gender intersects with other vulnerabilities and gender-specific



Ranjitha Christie Borgoary, representative of LWF at the Commission on the Status of Women, sharing achievements and challenges with regards to gender justice in India. Photo: LWF/C. Rendón

violations require gender-specific interventions. Violations that impact women and men differently require gender-integrated interventions.

The HRBA addresses issues holistically, taking into account the systems of power or influence in place and the way in which individuals are impacted by such systems. It

is essential to recognize the extent to which the social norms and the law place women and girls in a vulnerable position (regarding men and boys) in order to ensure a HRBA approach.

An HRBA with a gender mainstreaming focus removes sectorial “blinkers” and facilitates an integrated response to multifaceted development

problems, including the effective analysis and transformation of the social, political, legal, and policy frameworks that determine the relationship and gaps in capacity between rights holders and duty bearers.



Members of the Ecumenical Women's network highlight their contributions to uplift rural women's rights at the Canadian mission in New York during the 62nd session of the CSW. Photo: LWF/C.Rendón

Faith and Feminism: Religious Voices Engaging with the UN to Advance Gender Equality

Christine Mangale

In 2015, the United Nations adopted Agenda 2030, Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, “a plan of action for people, planet and prosperity,”¹⁸ to be implemented over the next 15 years. It includes 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets geared towards eradicating poverty, achieving gender equality, tackling diseases, addressing climate change and ensuring sustainable consumption and good governance, to name but a few. Unlike the SDGs predecessor goals, the Millennium Development Goals, which were only applied to Least Developed Countries (LDCs); the SDGs are universal in application and hold all UN member states accountable to work toward their various aims.

Within the SDGs, gender equality is a core consideration in the journey toward sustainable development and

all 17 goals highlight gender with the aim to ensure women benefit positively with any and all social, environmental and political impacts of this multilateral framework. Various SDGs consider gender through various lenses, such as inequalities, search for peaceful ways to resolve and prevent conflict, and aspire to “leave no-one behind.” Goal 5 explicitly aims to address inequalities between women and men, and the framework acknowledges that women often experience compounded challenges and are disproportionately affected by the scourge of poverty. It is a truly remarkable achievement that women’s rights and women’s empowerment are the threads that unite the SDGs. This fact should be celebrated, and all sectors of society will need to play their part in order to achieve this ambitious, but essential framework.

Civil society organizations, including faith-based organizations (FBOs) are presented with renewed opportunities to review their policies and positions on gender- and gender dynamics, as well as to hold governments and decision makers accountable to the principles of the universality of human rights and the inherent dignity of every human being. Moreover, civil society organizations need to demand guarantees for equal rights and the full enjoyment of life for all people, especially women and girls.

The SDGs have come at a time of significant political shifts that have changed the global landscape and could result in women’s rights being eroded. Currently the international community has agreed to normative frameworks enshrined in numerous

UN agreements including, but not limited to, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and the International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action. Each of these are under political threat and risk being seriously compromised. Attempts to push back, undermine or dilute agreed texts from these documents are particularly evident with regard to violence against women and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR), and are evidence of a crisis of multilateralism—the ability of governments to work on setting global norms, looking beyond “traditional,” cultural or religious ideologies to maintain a minimum standard of rights and privileges that all humans should be able to enjoy.

Certain groups from the public, private and informal sectors, who claim to uphold “traditional family values,” have become more vocal and are joining forces with some countries that oppose women’s rights. This can

be seen in the use, and at times abuse, of a rhetorical *‘religion’* to promote and substantiate their discriminatory policy perspectives. This is most visible during the annual meeting of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), the principal UN intergovernmental body dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women globally. The commission meets annually for two weeks at the UN headquarters in New York. The UN entity for gender equality and the empowerment of women, UN Women, is the main secretariat of the CSW. The CSW is tasked with monitoring the implementation of the Beijing Declaration (BPfA).

It is against the background of this growing backlash and selfish use of religion to undermine women’s rights, that a civil society led coalition was founded in the shadow of the United Nations Headquarters in New York bringing together like-minded faith-based organizations (FBOs), such as members of Ecumenical Women (EW) at the United Nations¹⁹, and the NGO Working Group on Faith and Feminism. This

working group was founded in 2015 and has since grown to include FBOs and allied organizations in Geneva and around the world. The Working Group on Faith and Feminism has been legitimized with additional support from the UN Interagency Task Force on Religion and Development. The Working Group’s members represent organizations from a diversity of faith groups, feminist scholars, secular feminist organizations and social justice community-based groups that are working for gender equality through the lens of “faith and feminism.” The working group seeks to “foster a new discourse at the UN about the means for the transformation of structures and attitudes that sustain gender discrimination and inequality, and the role that religion and faith can play in advancing gender equality worldwide.”²⁰ Advocacy is conducted with the aim of achieving gender equality in the implementation of Agenda 2030 through a policy approach, with supporting evidence collected by activists and other social actors at the local-to-regional levels.

The working group has recognized that while there has been some success in the implementation of the SDGs, many political and social structures, norms and traditions remain and obstruct genuine pathways to gender justice. The working group recognizes the important role that FBOs and religious communities and leaders play in society, including in addressing injustices that prevent women and girls from reaching their full potential. It urges religious and secular organizations to bury mistrust, work together and confront old and new challenges, including the rise of extremist movements.

The working group notes that “extremist movements have exerted strong pressure to restrict women’s legal, property, sexual and reproductive rights and to limit their access to education and their participation in civic and political life. In addition, women and girls have experienced more physical insecurity, psychological and physical violence and other forms of human rights violations. The effects of such widespread injustice are not limited to women; rather, they

jeopardize the well-being of families and communities, and obstruct the progress of humanity as a whole.”²¹

Power imbalances between women and men breed inequalities at every level of society (economic, political and social). This uneven power dynamic is felt the world over—particularly when gender divisions are compounded with other forms of social exclusion such as poverty and during incidents of crisis or conflict where women’s bodies become the battlefields.

Extremism manifests itself in many ways, however at the UN it is an ever-present element at conferences that feature the lives, bodies or rights of women and girls. Tools applied to erode the rights of women include: an extremely narrow concept of gender (limited to the gender binary excluding trans and intersex people), the militant determinism of anti-choice activists, opposition to the self-determination of women over their own bodies and health, denial of lesbian, gay and bi-sexualities, rejection of sexual and sexuality education, dismissal of the proliferation of

violence inflicted upon women and girls, and a refusal to acknowledge evidence from intersectional analysis about how the inequalities faced by women of color, rural women, gay and trans-women are exacerbated.

Discussion questions that can be used in any setting²²

- What does the concept of “Faith” in association with “Feminism” mean for you?
- What does faith and feminism mean for you, your organization or community?
- Please share one or two stories (or examples) where faith and feminism have come together in your work. What successes have you experienced?
- What challenges did you face? And how did you overcome the challenges?
- What insights has your organization/community gained from this experience?
- Which tools and resources does your organization have to do this



2015

Participants of the Women's Human Rights Advocacy Training from 2015 to 2018.



2016



work? Which ones do you need to do/continue/boost your work?

- What major recommendations would you make to the United Nations and other agencies with regard to policy and action on faith and feminism?

Practical guide to UN engagement

Nearly 4,000 NGO representatives participate at the annual Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). The CSW is considered as one of the largest annual gatherings of international women's movements. It provides a unique opportunity to influence the UN agenda and to make sure the Beijing Platform for Action is integrated in the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. CSW sessions are theme based²³.

Regional consultations

In preparation of each session of the CSW, UN Women usually convenes preparatory meetings on the priority theme, and there is an Expert Group Meeting, which usually develops a concept note, background papers and a synthesis report. Online discussions also are held in conjunc-

tion with some of the different UN agencies. Another venue for access is at regional preparatory meetings. These regional consultations are hosted by UN Women regional offices, together with other UN agencies, and in collaboration with UN Economic Social Commissions. In addition to these consultative processes, UN Women also hosts a Multi-Stakeholder Forum a few weeks before the CSW. The forum is geared towards engaging in discussions and expressing commitment around the priority theme of the year. All these spaces provide advocacy opportunities for local, national, regional civil society representatives to contribute their input and issues meaningfully. They also work to ensure that States are held accountable to their citizens and cannot make policy that is isolated from the lived experience on the ground. This is especially important where space for civil society is limited, restricted or disallowed at the country level.

Communications procedure

One of the best tools available for CSOs is the Communication Procedure. Any individual, non-governmental organization, group, or network can submit communications (complaints/appeals/petitions) to the CSW. The information must be related to alleged violations of human rights that impacts the status of women in any country. The CSW then considers this information as part of its annual program of work and helps them to identify trends, patterns of injustice and discriminatory practices. However, this is not an avenue for redressing individual grievances²⁴

How and when to influence the process

Preparations for CSW begin at least one year in advance, hence NGOs need to really factor in long-term planning. Gather information early, find out who your allies are, and read all relevant UN documents. Find out what your government's position is on the issue. Also, make a list of friendly countries that can help you

champion your position²⁵. The UN, after all, is a gathering of member states. Civil society and FBOs, therefore serve as watchdogs to ensure that people are not forgotten in the governmental process.

UN member states' representatives convey and defend their positions based on instructions from the central government in their home country. These capital city positions are critical in their decision making. However, some UN representatives may act on their own independently in New York. It is therefore important to start influencing the UN process at the national level. NGOs can reach out to their governments, establish good relations (if possible and does not put you at risk) and discuss the priority theme or request to be part of their official CSO member delegation. Contact the main ministry responsible, for example, the women and children's affair ministries. Present yourself and the issues well. Be civil at all times.

It is also important to connect at the regional level during the regional preparatory consultations or at any

other UN meeting. There is strength in numbers, remember to work in coalitions, caucuses or forums.²⁶

You must intervene at the right key moments during the whole process. It is highly recommended to do this at the beginning of the process.

NGO CSW participation

There are at least five main ways to engage in advocacy during CSW:

- Written Statements: NGOs with consultative status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) can submit written statements to the Commission (usually in October the previous year). These statements will be translated into the six UN official languages and posted on the CSW website prior to the CSW session. Joint CSO statements are highly encouraged. If your organization does not have ECOSOC status, you can still contribute to a coalition statement.
- Oral statements: You can apply to deliver an oral statement (three minutes) during the CSW general

discussion. There is very limited space for intervention. Sign up information is usually posted on the CSW website in January-February.

- Working in coalitions: for joint written or oral statements or overall advocacy strategy.
- Meeting with government delegates: You can schedule "mission visits" with different UN member states to push/suggest language you would like to see on the final outcome document known as the "agreed conclusions." Follow the negotiations of the text and use your allies when access is limited.
- Parallel and Side events: You can host a panel discussion with other NGO members (parallel events) or with governments or UN agencies (side events). These events serve as networking spaces, as well as spaces for sharing best practices or highlighting issues that are critical to the organizers²⁷.

When all is said and done, the work must continue back at the local,



Joint side event on the role of Christian and Muslim faith-based organizations in the implementation of SDGs, during The Commission on the Status of Women in 2018. Photo: LWF

national or regional level to hold governments accountable to what they have stipulated in the “agreed

conclusions.”²⁸ Remember to share your experience using the best tools you have, such as writing an article

for your local newspaper, holding talks and presentations, or posting on social media.

Theater of the Oppressed, a Tool to Spark Change and Embrace the CEDAW Convention

Claudia Signoretti

Theater of the Oppressed is the collective name for the body of theatrical techniques developed by the Brazilian theater director and dramatist Augusto Boal in the early 1970s. Boal's particular type of interactive theater is rooted in the pedagogical and political principles specific to popular teaching methods developed by Brazilian educator Paulo Freire: (1) to see the situation lived by the participants; (2) to analyze the root causes of the situation, including both internal and external sources of oppression; (3) to explore group solutions to these problems; and (4) to act to change the situation. It is a collaborative, educational and political theater that fosters democratic and cooperative forms of interaction among participants. Theater is emphasized as a language accessible to all. This form of interactive theater intends

to transform the lives of spectators to become performers, acting out solutions to social problems. It is a rehearsal theater designed for people who want to learn ways of fighting back against oppression in their daily lives. The Theater of the Oppressed enables spectators to engage with the theatrical action and use theater as a rehearsal for reality. The Theater of the Oppressed includes the Image Theater, Forum Theater, Invisible Theater, Rainbow of Desire and Legislative Theater.

Forum Theater is a unique form of theater that transforms spectators into actors by enabling them to step into and change the theatrical action, encouraging debate and asking questions so that the audience can learn collectively. A play or scene, usually indicating some kind of oppression, is shown twice. During the replay, any member of

the audience (*spect-actor*) is allowed to shout "stop!" to step forward and take the place of one of the oppressed characters, showing how they could change the situation to enable a different outcome. Several alternatives may be explored by different *spect-actors*. The other actors remain in character, improvising their responses. A facilitator (joker) is necessary to enable the communication between the players and the audience.

This strategy breaks through the barrier between performers and audience, putting them on an equal footing. It enables participants to try out courses of action that could be applicable to their everyday lives. This technique has been widely adapted for use in educational contexts as a problem solving technique. It is usually performed by a small group of people to enable a com-

munity to explore multiple solutions to a problem using their collective experience and wisdom.

Forum Theater aims to generate solutions to real-life problems. Problematic situations are staged and the audience is invited to intervene, to enact their own ideas and to explore several possible solutions to the problem. The audience's participation allows everybody to identify the difficulties, discover common mistakes, test solutions and decide together on the best strategy.

The audience participates in a forum theater performance by examining the issue and identifying the problematic characters and mechanisms that trigger oppression. In a second phase, the joker (facilitator) involves the *spect-actors* by posing simple questions and encouraging everybody to take part. The audience is invited to go on stage to rehearse possible solutions. After each intervention, the joker asks the audience to analyze the evolution, assess risks and determine whether a specific solution proposed might work. At the end of the event, the joker reviews

the different contributions with the audience. Forum Theater is an opportunity for people to try out strategies that they may not get an opportunity to put into practice in real life. This serves as a rehearsal and with none of the risks of real life action. The audience decides how to apply the insights gleaned in their private, social and political life.

The Invisible Theater is a form of theater that takes place in a public space without people realizing that they are watching theater. It transforms public space into a public stage, creating theatrical situations in public places in a way in which the public is unaware that the spectacle is being acted out. Usually an argument develops between two or more of the actors, a "problem" situation is created, and onlookers get involved and a real dialogue takes place on the issue. Bystanders are drawn into a discourse about social oppression and urged to take immediate action that might affect the scenario being played out. It should not be seen as a theatrical performance with the actors staging a conflictual situation.

The general public is unaware that a play is being acted out and the scene is so realistic that it provokes a spontaneous response by the bystanders. The aim is to stimulate debate and get people to question issues in a public forum.

In light of the fact that in Europe different forms of oppression are not as visible and concrete as in other parts of the world, Boal redesigned some of the exercises and techniques. In response to often internalized experiences of oppression, Boal developed the "Cop in the Head" technique. This set of exercises is aimed at working on hidden and subtle forms of oppression, it helps unearth the voices we carry inside, our own "cops," and explores the causes of one's internal conflicts. These exercises, which are considered by many to be therapeutic in nature, are firmly rooted in theater techniques. The interiorized oppressors act as discouraging voices that inhibit our actions and stop us from doing what we want to do or saying what we need to say. This technique enables us to take these "cops" out



Participants at the Women's Human Rights Advocacy Training practicing the Theater of the Oppressed methodology, building up skills to tackle gender stereotypes. Photo: LWF/C. Rendón

of our heads, to put them on the stage, make them visible for all, and deal with them one by one, with the aim of disarming them altogether.

Boal developed the Legislative Theater as a way of using the Forum Theater, but instead of acting out

a scene the subject of the performance is a new law.

Spect-actors can take the stage, express their opinion and support, oppose or modify any of the proposals. Boal found in it a way of using Forum Theater to democratize politics.

“Everybody can do politics, even the politicians,” he said. So, using the idea that we are not passive spectators of what happens, but we can observe, look at what happens, and then act upon reality, he proposed presenting a scene created from



Participants at the Women's Human Rights Advocacy Training joined the campaign Thursdays in Black for a world free of sexual and gender-based violence, led by the World Council of Churches. Photo: LWF/C. Rendón

peoples' lives and experiences, to determine the need for creating and enacting laws.

In bridging the separation between actor and spectator, the Theater of the Oppressed gives power to the audience, making it the real author and protagonist of the performance. The *spect-actors*

are engaged in a self-empowering process of collective analysis of shared problems and open dialogue that fosters critical thinking.

When I discovered the Theater of the Oppressed methodology, during a residential training course run by Olivier Malcor, I was immediately fascinated and started to apply it in my

daily work. I started with workshops in schools on the use of non-violent means to manage personal, social and political conflict, and with adults on gender roles and stereotypes. Some months later, I was involved with the Italian civil society platform "Thirty years of CEDAW—work in progress" in drafting the CEDAW

Shadow Report and disseminating it to raise awareness about the critical aspects of the Italian protection system against gender discriminations. During this experience, I noticed that despite its importance, the CEDAW Convention was not well known in Italy and barely used both by public and private actors. Consequently, many women's rights violations remained undisclosed and unrecognized. Therefore, the question was how to ensure the broad awareness and application of CEDAW. How can we make CEDAW part of our daily lives?

I began to integrate the two different experiences by combining the Theater of the Oppressed methodology with the universal CEDAW framework. The basic idea was to facilitate an experiential process, where individual experiences were linked to national and international contexts, continually moving from the micro- to the macrocosm and back again. This process has greatly improved the understanding of gender-based discrimination and gender-stereotypical attitudes.

The following tools have been used so far.

Workshops on gender stereotypes and roles

Through games and exercises, the Theater of the Oppressed workshops explored and examined gender issues we face in our daily lives. The aim of the workshop is: (a) to guide the participants in identifying gender stereotypes and gender-based discriminations (according to the CEDAW articles); and (b) to promote a collective and playful research of possible actions, strategies and recommendations to tackle gender-based problems. The experiential workshop is very useful to develop a gender perspective and help people to understand how to approach daily situations with a gender lens.

PowerPoint presentation on women's rights

Based on the CEDAW Italian Shadow Report, a PowerPoint presentation outlines, in an original and dynamic way, the main contents of the report. It highlights how gender stereotypes

affect personal, professional and life's choices and threaten and constrain women's freedom and fundamental rights in every field. At the end of the PowerPoint, using the Image Theater techniques, the audience is invited to intervene and change the statues, in order to deconstruct stereotypes and reconstruct their dreams of an adequate and gender-sensitive representation of men and women in society.

What cultural change do we want to see in our society? The active involvement of the audience in the research of the desired situation is essential to make the struggle more effective.

Forum theater on gender-based oppression

A difficult situation experienced by women is staged (i.e., domestic violence, discrimination at the workplace, etc.). The general context and concrete problematic situation in women's daily lives are acted out simply and briefly. Then the audience tries to tackle the problem and rehearses solutions.

The Forum Theater allows for discussion within a safe theatrical framework, about what is needed to change a problematic situation in terms of individual and collective behavior, as well as in terms of policies and laws.

In my experience, the Theatre of the Oppressed methodology combined with CEDAW tools has innovatively added value with regard to the advancement of women's rights. Crucially, the process:

1) Provides space for physical expression: people mainly work with their bodies and find that gender stereotypes are unconsciously absorbed there. Starting from the experiential learning of

gender concepts, they gradually discover and understand the complexity of the cultural, social and political framework of gender-based violence.

2) Is based on an interactive approach, stimulating evaluation, critical thinking and imaginative responses. It promotes a culture of dialogue, offering a space where everybody can speak, act and suggest. Nobody is reduced to just watching, listening and passively receiving information. As a consequence, both men and women are urged to play an active role in finding and reworking possible strategies to overcome women's rights violations.

3) Is flexible, it can be adapted to different contexts in terms of

age, cultural and geographical background.

4) Offers a well-balanced alternation between notions of gender equality and practices in daily life. This experiential learning can originate deep and real changes at both the individual and community levels and it allows us to understand every time what can be done and why.

The Theater of the Oppressed methodology makes the sometimes invisible visible, in such a way that in the future it will no longer be possible not to see it. Once people have a clear picture, they are more likely to get involved and take immediate action on sensitive issues that they might otherwise avoid.

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Glossary of Abbreviations

BPfA	Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action	SuR	State under Review (Universal Periodic Review)
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women	UN	United Nations
CSO	Civil Society Organization	UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
CSW	Commission on the Status of Women	UN Women	UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
FBOs	Faith-Based Organization	UPR	Universal Periodic Review
GR	General Recommendation of the CEDAW Committee		
HRBA	Human Rights-Based Approach		
HRC	United Nations Human Rights Council		
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization		
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights		
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights		

Further Resources

ACT Alliance Gender-Inclusive Rights-Based Development Manual actalliance.org/capacity-building/gender-inclusive-rights-based-manual/

Lutheran World Federation. Advocacy Handbook (2018) at: www.lutheranworld.org/sites/default/files/2018/documents/advocacy_handbook.pdf

The Danish Institute for Human Rights. UPR-SDG Data Explorer, at www.upr.humanrights.dk

UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. The CEDAW Convention, at: www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CEDAW.aspx

United Nations Population Fund, Digni. Realizing the Faith Dividend: Religion, Gender, Peace and Security in Agenda 2030. 2016, at: www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/50426_UNFPA_Donor-UN-FBO-Consultations_Web.pdf

United Nations Human Rights. Office of the High Commissioner, Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council, at www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/SP/Pages/Welcomepage.aspx

United Nations Human Rights. Office of the High Commissioner, A Practical Guide for Civil Society. How to follow up on United Nations Human Rights Recommendations, at:

www.ohchr.org/Documents/AboutUs/CivilSociety/HowtoFollowUNHRRRecommendations.pdf

United Nations Human Rights. Office of the High Commissioner, A Practical Guide for Civil Society. Civil Society Space and the United Nations Human Rights System, at: www.ohchr.org/Documents/AboutUs/CivilSociety/CS_space_UNHRSysytem_Guide.pdf

UPR information, Documentation for NGOs, at www.upr-info.org/en

Link to Side by Side – Faith Movement for Gender Justice's online library. Tools and resources shared by Christian FBOs on gender justice: sidebysidegender.org/library/

Free online course on Gender + analysis by the Canadian Government, www.swc-cfc.gc.ca/gba-acs/course-cours-en.html.

The Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA+) is an analytical tool used to assess how diverse groups of women, men and gender-diverse people may experience policies, programs and initiatives.

UNWomen. The Commission on the Status of Women, at: www.unwomen.org/en/csw

Ecumenical Women NY. Advocacy Guide to CSW, at: ecumenicalwomen.org/2016/03/09/ecumenical-womens-guide-to-advocacy-3rd-edition/

Resources in video format

Video from ACT Alliance HRBA training: Introduction to gender concepts (shown in the session on Concepts of gender, intersectionality & discrimination) vimeo.com/255528961

Video from ACT Alliance HRBA training: What is discrimination? (shown in the session on Concepts of gender, intersectionality & discrimination) vimeo.com/253153512

Videos/streaming from the CEDAW sessions can be found by going to this webpage webtv.un.org/meetings-events/ and then clicking on the following links: meeting and events > human rights treaty bodies > committee on the elimina-

tion of discrimination against women (CEDAW). From there one can choose the country of interest (only fairly recent reviews are available).

Link to video of theatre of the oppressed in a Tanzanian community: www.youtube.com/watch?v=gckv_nuNbA&t=255s

Link to video from Angola (land rights project lead by former participants to the Training from LWF) www.lutheranworld.org/content/angola

Endnotes

- ¹ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2017). International Migration Report 2017: Highlights (ST/ESA/SER.A/404).
- ² “The Role of Faith Leaders in Achieving Gender Justice”, Solène Brabant, Jenny Brown, in Side by Side Advocacy Briefing, (London: Side by Side Gender, 2018), 7. Available at: sidebysidegender.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/SbSAdvocacy2018_Final_English.pdf [accessed 15 January 2019].
- ³ Gender Justice Policy, (Geneva: The Lutheran World Federation, 2013), 7. Available at: www.lutheranworld.org/content/resource-lwf-gender-justice-policy [accessed 15 January 2019].
- ⁴ Churches say ‘NO’ to Violence Against Women, (Geneva: The Lutheran World Federation, 2002). Available at: www.lutheranworld.org/content/resource-churches-say-no-violence-against-women-action-plan-churches [accessed 15 January 2019]
- ⁵ Rev. Dr Marie Fortune and Rabbi Cindy Enger, “Violence against Women and the Role of Religion” in: VAW net, Applied Research Forum National Electronic Network on Violence Against Women, 2005/3, 1. Available at: www.ncdsv.org/images/vawnet_vawandtheroleofreligion_3-2005.pdf [accessed: 15 January 2019]
- ⁶ The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), 1979. The full text is included as an annexe to this handbook. It can be downloaded in various languages: www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/cedaw.htm [accessed 15 January 2019].
- ⁷ Frances Raday “Gender and democratic citizenship: the impact of CEDAW”, in: International Journal of Constitutional Law, Volume 10, Issue 2, 30 March 2012, 512–530. Available at: doi.org/10.1093/icon/mor068 [accessed on 15 January 2019].
- ⁸ Overview of the working methods of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in relation to the reporting process, (CEDAW, W/C/2009/II/4), VIII. Available at: www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cedaw/docs/Working_methods_CEDAW_en.pdf [accessed on: 15 January 2019].
- ⁹ For a complete overview of the General Recommendations of the CEDAW Committee in different languages, please consult: www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CEDAW/Pages/Recommendations.aspx [accessed on: 15 January 2019].
- ¹⁰ Statement by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on its relationship with non-governmental organizations (CEDAW, 45th session). Avail-

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- able at: www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/CEDAW/Statements/NGO.pdf [accessed on: 15 January 2019].
- ¹¹ Website of the United Nations Human Rights High Commissioner: tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/TBSearch.aspx?TreatyID=4&DocTypeID=29 [accessed: 15 January 2019].
- ¹² The email address of the CEDAW secretariat is: cedaw@ohchr.org, the postal address is: UNOG-OHCHR, CH-1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland.
- ¹³ Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, Optional Protocol, Article 4.
- ¹⁴ A description of the inquiry process can be found at: www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CEDAW/Pages/InquiryProcedure.aspx [accessed: 15 January 2019].
- ¹⁵ In 2013 The Lutheran World Federation adopted a new Gender Justice Policy that lays out a biblically-rooted framework for the Lutheran global communion of churches to take concrete steps to implement gender justice, adapting action plans to different contextual realities.
- ¹⁶ Details of the United Nations human rights based approach, including a variety of publications, can be found at : www.unfpa.org/human-rights-based-approach [accessed: 15 January 2019].
- ¹⁷ Gender Analysis, (United Nations Development Programme, Gender in Development, Programme Learning & Information Pack, January 2001), available at: www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/gender/Institutional%20Development/TLGEN1.6%20UNDP%20GenderAnalysis%20toolkit.pdf
- ¹⁸ Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
- ¹⁹ Ecumenical Women (EW) is a coalition of Christian denominations and ecumenical organizations that was formed in 2000 after Beijing +5 and has been actively mobilizing their networks, educating and advocating tirelessly for full implementation of BPfA, CEDAW, and the UN Security Council Resolution on Women, Peace and Security (1325 and its following resolutions). See: ecumenicalwomen.org/ [accessed 15 January 2019].
- ²⁰ This quote comes from a “Concept note”: Civil Society Working Group on Faith-Based Organizations and Feminists for Gender Equality, 29 September 2015, which has since been taken up in the UN Global platform on Gender Equality and Religion, see: www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2017/3/news-global-platform-on-gender-equality-and-religion-launched [accessed 15 January 2019].
- ²¹ Concept note, Civil Society Working Group on Faith-Based Organizations and Feminists for Gender Equality, 29 September 2015.

- ²² These questions were supplied by Saphira Rameshfar, Baha'i International Community, New York
- ²³ Advocacy Training in Negotiations and Women's Human Rights, the 2018 edition can be downloaded in various languages here: www.ngocsw.org/archive/news-you-can-use/advocacy-training-negotiations-womens-human-rights [accessed 15 January 2019].
- ²⁴ The outline for the Communications Procedure on how to submit a communication to the Commission on the Status of Women can be found here: www.unwomen.org/en/csw/communications-procedure [accessed 15 January 2019].
- ²⁵ Ecumenical Women at the United Nations, Ecumenical Women's Guide to Advocacy, eds. Catherine Bordeau et al, (Ecumenical Women, 3rd edition, 2016) ecumenicalwomen.files.wordpress.com/2016/03/3rd-ed_ecuwomensguide-web.pdf [accessed 15 January 2019].
- ²⁶ As recommended in: Advocacy Training in Negotiations and Women's Human Rights, available at: www.ngocsw.org/archive/news-you-can-use/advocacy-training-negotiations-womens-human-rights [accessed 15 January 2019].
- ²⁷ Op cit. Advocacy Training in Negotiations and Women's Human Rights www.ngocsw.org/archive/news-you-can-use/advocacy-training-negotiations-womens-human-rights [accessed 15 January 2019].
- ²⁸ The following link offers annual updates on the outcomes of the of the Commission on the Status of Women: www.unwomen.org/en/csw/outcomes [accessed 15 January 2019].

Annex: Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women

The States Parties to the present Convention,

Noting that the Charter of the United Nations reaffirms faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women,

Noting that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights affirms the principle of the inadmissibility of discrimination and proclaims that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights and that everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth therein, without distinction of any kind, including distinction based on sex,

Noting that the States Parties to the International Covenants on Human Rights have the obligation to ensure the equal rights of men and women to enjoy all economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights,

Considering the international conventions concluded under the auspices of the United Nations and the specialized agencies promoting equality of rights of men and women,

Noting also the resolutions, declarations and recommendations adopted by the United Nations and the specialized agencies promoting equality of rights of men and women,

Concerned, however, that despite these various instruments extensive discrimination against women continues to exist,

Recalling that discrimination against women violates the principles of equality of rights and respect for human dignity, is an obstacle to the participation of women, on equal terms with men, in the political, social, economic and cultural life of their countries, hampers the growth of the prosperity of society and the family and makes more difficult the full development of the potentialities of women in the service of their countries and of humanity,

Concerned that in situations of poverty women have the least access to food, health, education, training and opportunities for employment and other needs,

Convinced that the establishment of the new international economic order based on equity and justice will contribute significantly towards the promotion of equality between men and women,

Emphasizing that the eradication of apartheid, all forms of racism, racial discrimination, colonialism, neo-colonialism, aggression, foreign occupation and domination and interference in the internal affairs of States is essential to the full enjoyment of the rights of men and women,

Affirming that the strengthening of international peace and security, the relaxation of international tension, mutual co-operation among all States irrespective of their social and economic systems, general and complete disarmament, in

particular nuclear disarmament under strict and effective international control, the affirmation of the principles of justice, equality and mutual benefit in relations among countries and the realization of the right of peoples under alien and colonial domination and foreign occupation to self-determination and independence, as well as respect for national sovereignty and territorial integrity, will promote social progress and development and as a consequence will contribute to the attainment of full equality between men and women,

Convinced that the full and complete development of a country, the welfare of the world and the cause of peace require the maximum participation of women on equal terms with men in all fields,

Bearing in mind the great contribution of women to the welfare of the family and to the development of society, so far not fully recognized, the social significance of maternity and the role of both parents in the family and in the upbringing of children, and aware that the role of women in procreation should not be a basis for discrimination but that the upbringing of children requires a sharing of responsibility between men and women and society as a whole,

Aware that a change in the traditional role of men as well as the role of women in society and in the family is needed to achieve full equality between men and women,

Determined to implement the principles set forth in the Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and, for that purpose, to adopt the measures required for the elimination of such discrimination in all its forms and manifestations,

Have agreed on the following:

PART I

Article 1

For the purposes of the present Convention, the term "discrimination against women" shall mean any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.

Article 2

States Parties condemn discrimination against women in all its forms, agree to pursue by all appropriate means and without delay a policy of eliminating discrimination against women and, to this end, undertake:

(a) To embody the principle of the equality of men and women in their national constitutions or other appropriate legislation if not yet incorporated therein and to ensure, through law and other appropriate means, the practical realization of this principle;

(b) To adopt appropriate legislative and other measures, including sanctions where

appropriate, prohibiting all discrimination against women;

(c) To establish legal protection of the rights of women on an equal basis with men and to ensure through competent national tribunals and other public institutions the effective protection of women against any act of discrimination;

(d) To refrain from engaging in any act or practice of discrimination against women and to ensure that public authorities and institutions shall act in conformity with this obligation;

(e) To take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women by any person, organization or enterprise;

(f) To take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to modify or abolish existing laws, regulations, customs and practices which constitute discrimination against women;

(g) To repeal all national penal provisions which constitute discrimination against women.

Article 3

States Parties shall take in all fields, in particular in the political, social, economic and cultural fields, all appropriate measures, including legislation, to ensure the full development and advancement of women, for the purpose of guaranteeing them the exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms on a basis of equality with men.

Article 4

1. Adoption by States Parties of temporary special measures aimed at accelerating

de facto equality between men and women shall not be considered discrimination as defined in the present Convention, but shall in no way entail as a consequence the maintenance of unequal or separate standards; these measures shall be discontinued when the objectives of equality of opportunity and treatment have been achieved.

2. Adoption by States Parties of special measures, including those measures contained in the present Convention, aimed at protecting maternity shall not be considered discriminatory.

Article 5

States Parties shall take all appropriate measures:

(a) To modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, with a view to achieving the elimination of prejudices and customary and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women;

(b) To ensure that family education includes a proper understanding of maternity as a social function and the recognition of the common responsibility of men and women in the upbringing and development of their children, it being understood that the interest of the children is the primordial consideration in all cases.

Article 6

States Parties shall take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to suppress all forms of traffic in women and exploitation of prostitution of women.

PART II

Article 7

States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country and, in particular, shall ensure to women, on equal terms with men, the right:

(a) To vote in all elections and public referenda and to be eligible for election to all publicly elected bodies;

(b) To participate in the formulation of government policy and the implementation thereof and to hold public office and perform all public functions at all levels of government;

(c) To participate in non-governmental organizations and associations concerned with the public and political life of the country.

Article 8

States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure to women, on equal terms with men and without any discrimination, the opportunity to represent their Governments at the international level and to participate in the work of international organizations.

Article 9

1. States Parties shall grant women equal rights with men to acquire, change or retain their nationality. They shall ensure in particular that neither marriage to an alien nor change of nationality by the husband during marriage shall automatically change

the nationality of the wife, render her stateless or force upon her the nationality of the husband.

2. States Parties shall grant women equal rights with men with respect to the nationality of their children.

PART III

Article 10

States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in order to ensure to them equal rights with men in the field of education and in particular to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women:

(a) The same conditions for career and vocational guidance, for access to studies and for the achievement of diplomas in educational establishments of all categories in rural as well as in urban areas; this equality shall be ensured in pre-school, general, technical, professional and higher technical education, as well as in all types of vocational training;

(b) Access to the same curricula, the same examinations, teaching staff with qualifications of the same standard and school premises and equipment of the same quality;

(c) The elimination of any stereotyped concept of the roles of men and women at all levels and in all forms of education by encouraging coeducation and other types of education which will help to achieve this aim and, in particular, by the revision of textbooks and school programmes and the adaptation of teaching methods;

(d) The same opportunities to benefit from scholarships and other study grants;

(e) The same opportunities for access to programmes of continuing education, including adult and functional literacy programmes, particularly those aimed at reducing, at the earliest possible time, any gap in education existing between men and women;

(f) The reduction of female student drop-out rates and the organization of programmes for girls and women who have left school prematurely;

(g) The same Opportunities to participate actively in sports and physical education;

(h) Access to specific educational information to help to ensure the health and well-being of families, including information and advice on family planning.

Article 11

1. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of employment in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, the same rights, in particular:

(a) The right to work as an inalienable right of all human beings;

(b) The right to the same employment opportunities, including the application of the same criteria for selection in matters of employment;

(c) The right to free choice of profession and employment, the right to promotion, job security and all benefits and conditions of service and the right

to receive vocational training and retraining, including apprenticeships, advanced vocational training and recurrent training;

(d) The right to equal remuneration, including benefits, and to equal treatment in respect of work of equal value, as well as equality of treatment in the evaluation of the quality of work;

(e) The right to social security, particularly in cases of retirement, unemployment, sickness, invalidity and old age and other incapacity to work, as well as the right to paid leave;

(f) The right to protection of health and to safety in working conditions, including the safeguarding of the function of reproduction.

2. In order to prevent discrimination against women on the grounds of marriage or maternity and to ensure their effective right to work, States Parties shall take appropriate measures:

(a) To prohibit, subject to the imposition of sanctions, dismissal on the grounds of pregnancy or of maternity leave and discrimination in dismissals on the basis of marital status;

(b) To introduce maternity leave with pay or with comparable social benefits without loss of former employment, seniority or social allowances;

(c) To encourage the provision of the necessary supporting social services to enable parents to combine family obligations with work responsibilities and participation in public life, in particular through promoting the establishment and development of a network of child-care facilities;

(d) To provide special protection to women during pregnancy in types of work proved to be harmful to them.

3. Protective legislation relating to matters covered in this article shall be reviewed periodically in the light of scientific and technological knowledge and shall be revised, repealed or extended as necessary.

Article 12

1. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of health care in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, access to health care services, including those related to family planning.

2. Notwithstanding the provisions of paragraph 1 of this article, States Parties shall ensure to women appropriate services in connection with pregnancy, confinement and the post-natal period, granting free services where necessary, as well as adequate nutrition during pregnancy and lactation.

Article 13

States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in other areas of economic and social life in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, the same rights, in particular:

(a) The right to family benefits;

(b) The right to bank loans, mortgages and other forms of financial credit;

(c) The right to participate in recreational activities, sports and all aspects of cultural life.

Article 14

1. States Parties shall take into account the particular problems faced by rural women and the significant roles which rural women play in the economic survival of their families, including their work in the non-monetized sectors of the economy, and shall take all appropriate measures to ensure the application of the provisions of the present Convention to women in rural areas.

2. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in rural areas in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, that they participate in and benefit from rural development and, in particular, shall ensure to such women the right:

(a) To participate in the elaboration and implementation of development planning at all levels;

(b) To have access to adequate health care facilities, including information, counselling and services in family planning;

(c) To benefit directly from social security programmes;

(d) To obtain all types of training and education, formal and non-formal, including that relating to functional literacy, as well as, inter alia, the benefit of all community and extension services, in order to increase their technical proficiency;

(e) To organize self-help groups and co-operatives in order to obtain equal access to economic opportunities through employment or self-employment;

(f) To participate in all community activities;

(g) To have access to agricultural credit and loans, marketing facilities, appropriate technology and equal treatment in land and agrarian reform as well as in land resettlement schemes;

(h) To enjoy adequate living conditions, particularly in relation to housing, sanitation, electricity and water supply, transport and communications.

PART IV

Article 15

1. States Parties shall accord to women equality with men before the law.

2. States Parties shall accord to women, in civil matters, a legal capacity identical to that of men and the same opportunities to exercise that capacity. In particular, they shall give women equal rights to conclude contracts and to administer property and shall treat them equally in all stages of procedure in courts and tribunals.

3. States Parties agree that all contracts and all other private instruments of any kind with a legal effect which is directed at restricting the legal capacity of women shall be deemed null and void.

4. States Parties shall accord to men and women the same rights with regard to the law relating to the movement of persons and the freedom to choose their residence and domicile.

Article 16

1. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in all matters relating to

marriage and family relations and in particular shall ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women:

(a) The same right to enter into marriage;

(b) The same right freely to choose a spouse and to enter into marriage only with their free and full consent;

(c) The same rights and responsibilities during marriage and at its dissolution;

(d) The same rights and responsibilities as parents, irrespective of their marital status, in matters relating to their children; in all cases the interests of the children shall be paramount;

(e) The same rights to decide freely and responsibly on the number and spacing of their children and to have access to the information, education and means to enable them to exercise these rights;

(f) The same rights and responsibilities with regard to guardianship, wardship, trusteeship and adoption of children, or similar institutions where these concepts exist in national legislation; in all cases the interests of the children shall be paramount;

(g) The same personal rights as husband and wife, including the right to choose a family name, a profession and an occupation;

(h) The same rights for both spouses in respect of the ownership, acquisition, management, administration, enjoyment and disposition of property, whether free of charge or for a valuable consideration.

2. The betrothal and the marriage of a child shall have no legal effect, and all necessary action, including legislation, shall be taken to specify a minimum age

for marriage and to make the registration of marriages in an official registry compulsory.

PART V

Article 17

1. For the purpose of considering the progress made in the implementation of the present Convention, there shall be established a Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (hereinafter referred to as the Committee) consisting, at the time of entry into force of the Convention, of eighteen and, after ratification of or accession to the Convention by the thirty-fifth State Party, of twenty-three experts of high moral standing and competence in the field covered by the Convention. The experts shall be elected by States Parties from among their nationals and shall serve in their personal capacity, consideration being given to equitable geographical distribution and to the representation of the different forms of civilization as well as the principal legal systems.

2. The members of the Committee shall be elected by secret ballot from a list of persons nominated by States Parties. Each State Party may nominate one person from among its own nationals.

3. The initial election shall be held six months after the date of the entry into force of the present Convention. At least three months before the date of each election the Secretary-General of the United Nations shall address a letter to the States Parties inviting them to submit their nominations within two months. The

Secretary-General shall prepare a list in alphabetical order of all persons thus nominated, indicating the States Parties which have nominated them, and shall submit it to the States Parties.

4. Elections of the members of the Committee shall be held at a meeting of States Parties convened by the Secretary-General at United Nations Headquarters. At that meeting, for which two thirds of the States Parties shall constitute a quorum, the persons elected to the Committee shall be those nominees who obtain the largest number of votes and an absolute majority of the votes of the representatives of States Parties present and voting.

5. The members of the Committee shall be elected for a term of four years. However, the terms of nine of the members elected at the first election shall expire at the end of two years; immediately after the first election the names of these nine members shall be chosen by lot by the Chairman of the Committee.

6. The election of the five additional members of the Committee shall be held in accordance with the provisions of paragraphs 2, 3 and 4 of this article, following the thirty-fifth ratification or accession. The terms of two of the additional members elected on this occasion shall expire at the end of two years, the names of these two members having been chosen by lot by the Chairman of the Committee.

7. For the filling of casual vacancies, the State Party whose expert has ceased to function as a member of the Committee shall appoint another expert from among

its nationals, subject to the approval of the Committee.

8. The members of the Committee shall, with the approval of the General Assembly, receive emoluments from United Nations resources on such terms and conditions as the Assembly may decide, having regard to the importance of the Committee's responsibilities.

9. The Secretary-General of the United Nations shall provide the necessary staff and facilities for the effective performance of the functions of the Committee under the present Convention.

Article 18

1. States Parties undertake to submit to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, for consideration by the Committee, a report on the legislative, judicial, administrative or other measures which they have adopted to give effect to the provisions of the present Convention and on the progress made in this respect:

(a) Within one year after the entry into force for the State concerned;

(b) Thereafter at least every four years and further whenever the Committee so requests.

2. Reports may indicate factors and difficulties affecting the degree of fulfilment of obligations under the present Convention.

Article 19

1. The Committee shall adopt its own rules of procedure.

2. The Committee shall elect its officers for a term of two years.

Article 20

1. The Committee shall normally meet for a period of not more than two weeks annually in order to consider the reports submitted in accordance with article 18 of the present Convention.

2. The meetings of the Committee shall normally be held at United Nations Headquarters or at any other convenient place as determined by the Committee. (amendment, status of ratification)

Article 21

1. The Committee shall, through the Economic and Social Council, report annually to the General Assembly of the United Nations on its activities and may make suggestions and general recommendations based on the examination of reports and information received from the States Parties. Such suggestions and general recommendations shall be included in the report of the Committee together with comments, if any, from States Parties.

2. The Secretary-General of the United Nations shall transmit the reports of the Committee to the Commission on the Status of Women for its information.

Article 22

The specialized agencies shall be entitled to be represented at the consideration of the implementation of such provisions of the present Convention as fall within the scope of their activities. The Committee may invite the specialized agencies to submit reports on the implementation of the Convention in areas falling within the scope of their activities.

PART VI

Article 23

Nothing in the present Convention shall affect any provisions that are more conducive to the achievement of equality between men and women which may be contained:

- (a) In the legislation of a State Party; or
- (b) In any other international convention, treaty or agreement in force for that State.

Article 24

States Parties undertake to adopt all necessary measures at the national level aimed at achieving the full realization of the rights recognized in the present Convention.

Article 25

1. The present Convention shall be open for signature by all States.
2. The Secretary-General of the United Nations is designated as the depositary of the present Convention.
3. The present Convention is subject to ratification. Instruments of ratification shall be deposited with the Secretary-General of the United Nations.
4. The present Convention shall be open to accession by all States. Accession shall be effected by the deposit of an instrument of accession with the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Article 26

1. A request for the revision of the present Convention may be made at any time by any State Party by means of a

notification in writing addressed to the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

2. The General Assembly of the United Nations shall decide upon the steps, if any, to be taken in respect of such a request.

Article 27

1. The present Convention shall enter into force on the thirtieth day after the date of deposit with the Secretary-General of the United Nations of the twentieth instrument of ratification or accession.
2. For each State ratifying the present Convention or acceding to it after the deposit of the twentieth instrument of ratification or accession, the Convention shall enter into force on the thirtieth day after the date of the deposit of its own instrument of ratification or accession.

Article 28

1. The Secretary-General of the United Nations shall receive and circulate to all States the text of reservations made by States at the time of ratification or accession.
2. A reservation incompatible with the object and purpose of the present Convention shall not be permitted.
3. Reservations may be withdrawn at any time by notification to this effect addressed to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, who shall then inform all States thereof. Such notification shall take effect on the date on which it is received.

Article 29

1. Any dispute between two or more States Parties concerning the interpreta-

tion or application of the present Convention which is not settled by negotiation shall, at the request of one of them, be submitted to arbitration. If within six months from the date of the request for arbitration the parties are unable to agree on the organization of the arbitration, any one of those parties may refer the dispute to the International Court of Justice by request in conformity with the Statute of the Court.

2. Each State Party may at the time of signature or ratification of the present Convention or accession thereto declare that it does not consider itself bound by paragraph 1 of this article. The other States Parties shall not be bound by that paragraph with respect to any State Party which has made such a reservation.

3. Any State Party which has made a reservation in accordance with paragraph 2 of this article may at any time withdraw that reservation by notification to the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Article 30

The present Convention, the Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish texts of which are equally authentic, shall be deposited with the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF the undersigned, duly authorized, have signed the present Convention

“All human beings are born free and equal
in dignity and rights.”

International Declaration of Human Rights, Article 1

“In the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.”

The Bible, Genesis 1, 27



THE
LUTHERAN
WORLD
FEDERATION

A Communion
of Churches