



**CHURCH  
AND GENDER  
EQUALITY**



**PMU**

**RESOURCE  
AND TOOL BOX**



**CHURCH AND GENDER EQUALITY  
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Church and Gender Equality  
Resource and Tool Box

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

PMU’s View on Gender and Gender Equality .....	4
<b>PART 1 – CHURCH FOR GENDER EQUALITY .....</b>	<b>5</b>
The Heritage from Azusa Street.....	6
Reading the Bible with New Lenses .....	9
Created as Equals in God’s Image.....	12
Christ Restores and Reconciles .....	14
“Difficult” Passages.....	14
<b>PART 2 – DEFINITIONS .....</b>	<b>17</b>
Wordlist.....	18
<b>PART 3 – GENDER ANALYSIS IN DEVELOPMENT AND HUMANITARIAN PROJECTS .....</b>	<b>21</b>
Different Forms of Violence.....	22
Case Study Female Genital Mutilation.....	25
Privilege, Discrimination and Gender Stereotypes.....	27
Equality Starts with Us .....	29
Seven Master Suppression Techniques and Counter Strategies .....	30
Building a Peaceful Culture .....	32
Let Every Gift Thrive.....	34
Gender Mainstreaming .....	35
Working Transformatively to Challenge Limiting Gender Roles .....	38
Follow Up and Evaluation of Gender Equality Work .....	39
<b>PART 4 – STORIES .....</b>	<b>40</b>
Jane Angom.....	41
Kirion Mhazo.....	45
Magdalene Kelel.....	47
Madhu Thapa.....	49
<b>PART 5 – TOOLBOX FOR DIALOGUE AND ACTION .....</b>	<b>53</b>
Guidelines for Workshop Facilitators.....	54
Workshop Exercises.....	56
Gender Analysis.....	65

# PMU's View on Gender and Gender Equality

**GENDER EQUALITY IS** a question of life or death. Every day women and girls, men and boys, in every part of the world, are suffering the consequences of inequality. In all places where PMU works, we see different forms of discrimination based on gender, unequal distribution of power, influence and resources as well as sexual and gender based violence. Gender stereotypes and the expectations of society are limiting the opportunities for both women and men to shape their own lives, and thus also hinder development processes and societies to thrive.

As a part of the global Pentecostal movement, PMU sees the importance of the Church being an active voice and actor for gender equality in society. This book is designed to be a complement to PMU's policy for gender equality. It gives a theological perspective to gender equality work, provides concrete tools to take action on gender equality in organisations and Churches, as well as to provide examples by sharing experiences from our network of faith-based actors.

People's thoughts may go in different directions when they hear the words gender and gender equality, and we hope that the content of this book will be helpful in that reflection and give new insights and deeper understanding of what gender equality means. If we read and reflect with an open mind we will hopefully find that the book challenges us in a positive way.

Gender equality could be defined as women and men having the same opportunities to shape their own lives and the society they live in. For this to be obtained there must be a fair division of power, influence and resources in society, and discrimination against women and girls must end.

As a faith-based Christian organisation, PMU sees gender equality as a necessity for building a sustainable and just society. Gender equality is first and foremost about human rights for everyone, but it is also a precondition for a sustainable and peaceful development in the world. If we want to see a positive development, gender equality work is not optional, but should be a top priority in the development work of the Church.



NICLAS LINDGREN  
DIRECTOR, PMU

PART 1

# CHURCH FOR GENDER EQUALITY



# The Heritage from Azusa Street

6

**THE PENTECOSTAL REVIVAL** started at Azusa Street in Los Angeles, and spread over the world in different Christian movements, today counting over 600 million followers. It all began in 1906 with a small group of people praying, led by the Afro American preacher William Seymour. After weeks of praying, Seymour sent for his mentor, Pastor Lucy Farrow, from Houston. She was an experienced leader and much older than young Seymour. Farrow suggested that they should continue to pray and fast, and after ten days, one after the other were filled with the Holy Spirit. Four women and four men of different background and colour became the officials at Azusa Street. Among the Afro Americans, equality between sexes in Church was common, while for the white North American this must have been something extraordinary. The letterhead from Azusa Street names all eight officials, and the women are given titles with the same dignity as the men. They were not merely secretaries,

but City Missionaries and Pastors, and they led services, preached sermons and wrote articles for magazines. We often hear about William Seymour and Frank Bartleman, but there were also Lucy Farrow, Clara Lum, Florence Reed, Lillian Anderson Garr and many other women playing an important role in the Azusa Street revival.<sup>1</sup> In one of the first issues of the magazine *The Apostolic Faith*, the following words can be read: “No tool that God can use for his purpose is displaced because of skin colour, gender or lack of education”.

The Pentecostal movement was, in its early days, a progressive voice in society, advocating through words and actions for equality between people of different gender and colour. But with time, the movement has adjusted to the patriarchal values and structures inherited in society. A Swedish theological publication from 1918 clearly and sadly stated that women should not be church leaders.<sup>2</sup> This, and other events, had a big influence on the movement; increased

1 Alexander, Estrelida (2005). *The women of Azusa Street*. Cleveland, Ohio: Pilgrim Press

2 Oskarsson Nyberg, Gunilla, “Kvinnorna marginaliserades när väckelsen etablerats”, in Pingströrelsen Verksamhet och särdrag under 1900-talet. Libris förlag.



inequality was a fact and women would not be able to officially lead Churches in Sweden again until 1980, when Vasti Feldt was ordained pastor in Gilead Church, Gothenburg. This also had a huge influence on Swedish mission to Africa, Asia and Latin America. Even though many missionaries were women, the message to the new Pentecostals in different parts of the world was that women should not be pastors. We still suffer the consequences of this today, with very few women ordained as, for instance, Pastors and Board members in our global network of Churches. This means lost opportunities and potential since both women and men are needed to reflect the image of God.

Many Pentecostal Churches are now making progress towards becoming, once again, a movement where everyone is seen as equal. But we still have a long way to go. Instead of focusing on equality in creation and salvation we often get caught up in destructive power hierarchies, and our ideas about gender limit people in Church. How could a movement, that was promoting and practicing equality in its early days, get stuck in the patriarchal structures of society? Let's return to Azusa Street and ask ourselves what we can do to change the situation in our Churches and societies.

## Questions to reflect upon

- What do you think happened to the Pentecostal movement in terms of gender equality?
- Do you think one leader can reflect the image of God or do we need a variety of people of different background, age and gender?
- In what way would the Church be different if women and men had equal opportunities and roles?

# Reading the Bible with **New Lenses**

**A WOMAN WAS** cooking a leg of lamb. She cut the two ends, folded them in and put the roast into the oven. The daughter asked her mother: “Why do you cut the ends and fold them like that?” Her mother replied: “That’s the way your grandmother taught me.” So the daughter waited for the grandmother and asked, “Gran, why do we cut the ends from the joint and fold them in before placing the meat in the oven?” She too responded that her mother did it that way. Eventually they found out that the girls great-grandmother cooked lamb leg this way because her oven was so small.

There are many things in life that we do because of tradition or based on what we have learned from parents, teachers or other people around us. Often, we do not reflect much upon the reasons why we do, believe, teach or preach certain things. When it comes to gender issues in Church, we need to start question our beliefs and traditions.

The lenses you wear will determine how you read the Scripture, that means we always read the Bible with a certain perspective that will colour our reading.

From early age, women tend to develop the ability to take the perspective

of others and to see things from many different points of view. People in position of power, especially in Church, are often men. This means that a girl growing up will learn to identify with male leaders. Boys and men do not need to identify with women in the same way.

Because most of our Churches have male pastors, we mostly listen to male interpretation of the Scripture, thus tending to read the texts through male lenses, even if we are women. The lenses we wear when reading can have a big impact. Take the text about Abraham and Sarah as an example. If read from

## The lenses you wear will determine how you read the Scripture

a female perspective, maybe Sarah’s experience would be given more space.

In the same Bible passage, we find another story which is almost never told in its full length and width. It is the story about Hagar, the slave, who bears Abraham’s son. To bear the son of Abraham in her body must have changed her status and how she saw herself. She was no longer just a thing that Abraham owned, an object among other



objects. She became a person. Maybe this shift is what starts the conflict between Hagar and Sarah. At Sarah’s request, Abraham sends Hagar and their son out in the desert. But instead of meeting a certain death, Hagar and the boy are saved by the voice of God, and she gives Him the name “The one who sees me”. A woman who is a slave and a refugee in the desert is the only person

in the Bible who gives God a name. This is revolutionary, and it is an example that shows us a God who challenges existing human hierarchies built on ethnicity, gender and social class.

There is much more to discover about the story of Hagar, why not try to read it yourself with a new set of lenses? See exercise on p. 58.



## Questions to bear in mind while reading the Bible:

These are some questions <sup>3</sup> that we can use in order to read the Bible with new lenses, trying to see the texts from another point of view:

- What was the world like when this was written?
- What kind of situation or incident is being described, and in which context is it taking place?
- Why was it important to write this down? Why is the text written the way it is?
- What was the culture like in that specific context?
- What does this narrative tell us about the way people saw and understood God at that time?
- What possibilities/opportunities/choices do the people have in this account?
- What if you were someone else reading this text? Someone of a different colour/gender/age?

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<sup>3</sup> Esther Kazen, Pastor, in Seminar on *Reading the Bible with gender lenses*, Matteuskyrkan Gothenburg, 2016-11-12.

# Created as Equals in God's Image

**THE FIRST CHAPTER** of Genesis describes how God created Adam and Eve in his image, making no distinction between them, but treating them as equals.

“So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God He created them; male and female He created them.” (Genesis 1:27)

However, as we have seen in the previous chapter, we tend to read the Bible through the lenses of our culture. Since the culture of the Church is strongly influenced by patriarchal values inherited from society, many parts in the story of creation have been interpreted as establishing an order by which men are supposed to be superior to women: “And the Lord God said, ‘It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him’.” (Genesis 2:18). “And Adam said: This is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh: She shall be called ‘woman’ because she was taken out of man”. (Genesis 2:23)

To understand the meaning of these verses, we must make an effort to see

things from another perspective than the one of our culture. When creating woman, God calls her “a helper comparable to man”. Contrary to what we may think, there is no hint of inferiority in this passage. Through our cultural lenses, we tend to understand the word *helper* as inferior, a synonym for *maid* or perhaps even *slave*. But if we take a look at the Hebrew word *ezer*, which is used in the original text, we can see that this word appears 21 times in the Old Testament. In most cases, it refers to a superior, and not once does it refer to a subordinate. 16 times, the helper in question is God himself.<sup>4</sup> A help from God cannot be seen as inferior. In light of this, it is clear that woman was created to be equal to man.

Eve is also described as being “bone of Adam’s bone and flesh of Adam’s flesh”. Looking at the full picture, our interpretation is that this should be understood as a way to show how women were intended to have the same value and status as men. The reason for

4 See for example: Hewitt, Alan (2016), *The Gender Revolution, Emancipating Women and Empowering the Church*, River Publishing Media Ltd.

creating Eve from Adam's "bone and flesh" is unity, to emphasize how men and women were created equal.

Nothing is said in the story of creation about woman being created with certain gender specific traits which make her different from man. Neither is there any hint about women and men being given different roles or responsibilities. On the contrary, Genesis emphasizes that women and

men were created in God's image as equals. But when sin came into the world, it came with the consequences of broken relationships between mankind and God, and between man and woman, bringing with it violence, inequality and unhealthy hierarchies. As long as the inequality between men and women remains, the image of God that we are supposed to be on earth will be twisted and incomplete.

## Questions to reflect upon

- How do you think that culture affects our reading of the Bible?
- What could the story of equal creation mean for Christians today?

# Christ Restores and Reconciles

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. (John 3:16, The Bible)

**WHEN JESUS SACRIFICED** himself on the cross, He opened a possibility for us to be reconciled with God and with each other. This reconciliation does not only give us the possibility to be restored as human beings; it also makes the image of God complete again. The cross makes it possible to restore relationships. In Jesus Christ, we can become the ones we were intended to be. Therefore, from a Christian perspective, the reality of the cross is the single most important event in human history.

In the Bible, it is clear that Jesus always treated women and men as equals.

He met, listened to and cared for people equally. Mary, Magdalene, Joanna and Mary the mother of James were the first people to see Jesus after his resurrection. In a context where women were not allowed to testify in court, these three women were the ones who were given the task of bringing the message to the disciples that their master was alive.

Too often, people have been repressed in the name of religion. But the cross gives no one the right to repress another human being, and neither does the resurrected Christ.

**14**

## “Difficult” Passages

**AS WE HAVE** seen above it is important to think about the perspective we have when we read the Bible. It will make a huge difference if we read through the lenses of our cultural understanding, or with the story of equal creation in the image of God in mind.

In the New Testament we find a few passages that have been referred to as difficult, problematic or challenging in terms of gender equality. If read literally and out of context, these texts may indeed be challenging. However, if we go back to the original meaning of the

words, the context and the purpose of the text, we will find that they may say something quite different from what we first think.

As a starting point we need to keep the story of creation in mind, thinking about women and men being created equal in God's image, with the intention that we should live in equality. We also need to remember that the main message of the New Testament is that Jesus is restoring relationships, between humans and God as well as between human beings.

In the Jewish tradition a common prayer said by free men was: "Blessed be He who did not make me a Gentile. Blessed be He who did not make me a woman. Blessed be He who did not make me an uneducated man or a slave."<sup>5</sup> Paul is referring back to this prayer when he writes that: "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." (Gal 3:28)

This means that in Jesus Christ we are all equal regardless of gender, ethnicity, social status, titles etc.

Furthermore, we need to keep in mind that the Bible consists of many different kinds of texts. There are for example historical texts, prophecies, poetry and letters. Each text was written by a certain person in a certain time. In the case of Paul's letters, we need to remember that they are letters to a

specific congregation in a specific time with a specific purpose. With these things in mind we can have a closer look at two examples of passages that has been considered problematic from a gender perspective.

In 1 Corinthians 11:3 we read: "But I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God." What does this really mean? It does not seem to fit with what we know about God creating women and men as equals in

**In Jesus Christ  
we are all equal.** his image and about Jesus restoring the relationships that were broken. If we go to the Greek word that was

originally used by Paul and which has been translated to *head*, we find that this word could also mean *beginning* or *root*. In this light we see that the verse is not talking about hierarchy but rather about unity. We all belong together. The way it is written also reflects the order of creation, that man was created first. This has often been used to argue that man is above woman, but if we think about it once again, this way of arguing would mean that animals are above humans since they were created before man.

In 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 we read: "Women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the law says. If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful

5 Hewitt, Alan (2016), *The Gender Revolution, Emancipating Women and Empowering the Church*, River Publishing Media Ltd. P. 34.

for a woman to speak in the church.” We know from other Bible passages that Paul is positive to women speaking in the Church in general; as an example he writes about women praying and prophesising in 1 Corinthians 11:5. This also appears to contradict what Paul says in Galatians 3:28, where he declares that we are all one in Christ, as we saw above. This is a general statement about restored relationships in Christ, and when it comes to Corinthians 14 we need to look at the context in which it is written.

One possible explanation as to why Paul writes this, is that in Corinth at this time, the men sat in the front of the Church and the women in the back. If something was said from the pulpit that a woman did not understand she would shout from the back to her husband and ask him to explain. As we can imagine, this must have resulted in a lot of noise and disturbance, and in this context it makes perfect sense for Paul to ask the women to keep quiet in Church and ask their husbands later. This verse has often been

used to argue that women cannot teach or preach in Church. However, as we have seen here this verse says nothing about *teaching* but about *learning* and *order*.<sup>6</sup>

We need to read these kind of texts by looking at the context, the intention of the writer and the words used in the original version. If we do not know the context of a specific time and place, we should go back to the perspective of creation and restored relationships. If the literal meaning of a specific verse does not fit into the overall story of equal creation and salvation, we need to investigate it further.

At PMU we are convinced that gender equality is the key to building sustainable Churches, organisations and societies. When we read the Bible we see a beautiful story of creation and salvation where God intended for women and men to live in equality. Hierarchies, discrimination and inequality is not from God, and as Christian Churches and faith based development actors one of our top priorities should be to promote gender equality so that we can reflect the image of God as it was meant to be.

6 See for example Hewitt, Alan (2016), *The Gender Revolution, Emancipating Women and Empowering the Church*, River Publishing Media Ltd. P. 111 ff.

## Questions to reflect upon

- Do you think that our cultural context influence the way we read the Bible? If so, in what way?
- Think about your own Church. Is there room for different kind of people in leadership?

PART 2

# DEFINITIONS



# Wordlist

**WORDS ARE IMPORTANT** tools for us to understand the world and to be able to engage with each other. When learning more about gender and gender equality, you will come across new words and concepts. Many of these words have often been misunderstood or misused. When we do not know the meaning of a word we may feel insecure and instead of learning new things we could end up shutting ourselves out. Here, we have listed words that we think are useful in the work with gender equality. We have not used all words on the list in this book, but they will be useful for further reading and work within this field. When you know the meaning of a word you can use it, make it your own and learn much more.

Note! A **bolded** word in the description means the word also has its own description in the wordlist.

**Discrimination** is when an individual is disadvantaged or offended because of gender, ethnicity, religion, disability, sexual orientation or age.

**Feminism** is the belief that women and men should have equal rights and opportunities.

**Gender** is the cultural and social understanding of the biological differences between the sexes. This means that gender is based on *ideas* about how we *should be* as men and women. Gender roles and expectations are not static but change over time and between different places.

**Gender analysis** means that a situation, context or material is analysed from a gender perspective.

**Gender contract** is a concept that is used to describe **gender roles** and the

unspoken rules, mutual obligations, and rights which define the **stereotype** relations between women and men. These rules, obligations and rights might seem fixed, but are negotiable and changeable.

**Gender equality** is about equality between women and men, who should have the same opportunities to shape society and their own life. This includes issues such as power, influence, economy, education, work and physical integrity.

**Gender lenses** refer to looking at different situations from a gender perspective, this means to have **power structures**, **gender roles** and **stereotypes** in mind and analyse in what way they affect the situation.

**Gender mainstreaming** is to bring gender into the core business of an





organisation, i.e. to consider gender in all decisions and all actions that are taken.

**Gender roles** refers to the social and cultural differences between women and men, for example how we are expected to behave and dress, what we are expected to be interested in and work with.

**Intersectionality** helps us to look into how different systems of **discrimination** (for ex. gender, ethnicity, religion, disability, sexual orientation or age) are linked and works together, for example there is a difference between being a young girl and an old woman or between a rich man and a poor man.

**Norm** describes rules for social interaction and ideas about what is “normal”. For example, the norm in Sweden is to have two children in one family, so a family with six or seven children is breaking the norm and is seen as abnormal.

**Othering** is to define oneself or the own group by contrasting it to others. For example, we know what it is to be “a man” because it is the opposite to “a woman”.

**Patriarchy** is a hierarchical-structured society in which men hold more power than women.

**Power structure** is a concept describing the way in which power or authority is distributed between people within a certain context.

**Privilege** means that some people in society are advantaged over others based on sex, ethnicity, age, or other ground.

**Sex** refers to the biological differences between women and men. For instance we have different sets of hormones, women can have babies, and men cannot.

**Sexism** describes prejudiced discrimination, oppression or exploitation of people because of gender, gender identity or gendered attributes.

**Stereotype** is an over-simplified image of “others” that reduces people to a few characteristics based on sex, ethnicity, colour, age, sexuality, disability or other ground. For example, when we say: “well, everyone knows what women are like” or “he is such a typical man”, we are stereotyping.

**Victim-blaming** is when the victim of a crime or harmful act is held fully or partially responsible for it. This very often happens when a woman is a victim of sexual abuse.

**Yes means yes** represents a paradigm shift in the way we look at rape, moving beyond “no means no” toward the idea that consent must be explicit before sexual relations – also within a marriage.



PART 3

**GENDER ANALYSIS  
IN DEVELOPMENT  
AND HUMANITARIAN  
PROJECTS**



In this section we will get deeper into gender and gender equality from different perspectives. At PMU we are convinced that gender equality is a key to build sustainable Churches, organisations and societies. This means that a gender perspective should be mainstreamed in all projects that PMU is supporting. In order to analyze the situation for women and men, girls and boys in our societies, it is useful with models and theoretical frameworks that can help us reflect and see the situation from different perspectives.

## Different Forms of Violence

22

**THINK OF A** young girl in a poor rural area. Take a moment to picture her in your mind, and then try to answer the following questions:

- What kind of violence is this girl at risk of being exposed to?
- Is she at risk of being exposed to other forms of violence than boys of the same age?

Give yourself a couple of minutes to reflect before you go on reading. You might want to write down your answers.

Many different scenarios may have come up in your head when thinking about the girl. Maybe they included corporal punishment by parents or teachers, or sexual harassment or abuse. Maybe you were also thinking about a girl being bullied or beaten by her classmates. There is no right or wrong answers here, but probably, the types of violence that

first came to your mind were different forms of open or visible violence. And your answers to the second question may have included some form of sexual violence.

Now, imagine that our little girl is told by her parents that they can no longer let her go to school. The family can only afford to pay the school fees for one child, and in addition, the mother really needs some help with the work in the fields. The girl loves school and has dreamed about going to the university and become a doctor, but now all those dreams are shattered. She begs her parents to let her stay in school. Maybe she and her brother can both help in the fields after the school day? But the parents have made up their mind. There is very little chance that the girl will go on to study at the university anyway. When she grows just a little older, she will get married. Soon

she will be a mother herself, and she will not have the time to think about books and studies. They tell her that a girl is supposed to become a wife and a mother, and that this is not possible to combine with working as a doctor.

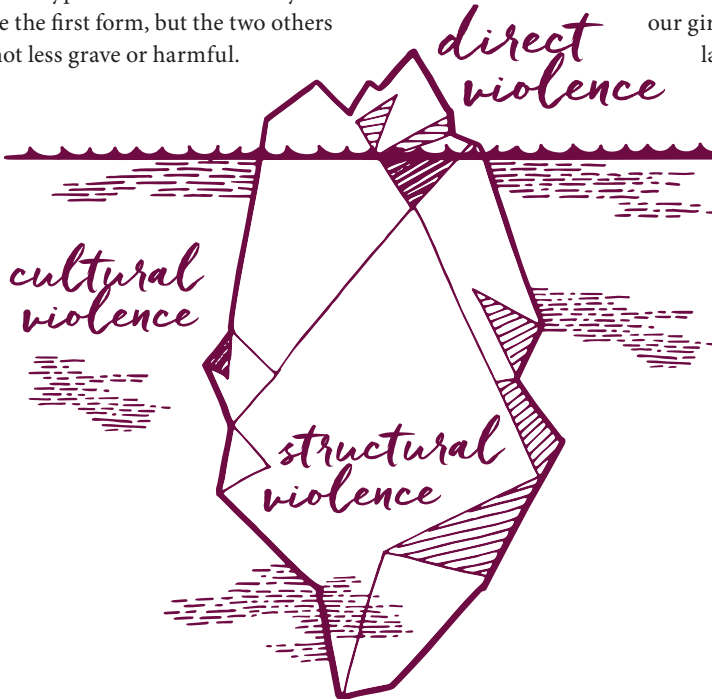
Eventually, the girl silently accepts her situation. There is no more arguing, and there is no need to use physical force to keep her from going to school. She helps her mother in the field without complaint, but she can never forget her dream.

No open violence has been used to stop our girl from going to school. Yet, we could argue that she has been exposed to violence. The peace researcher Johan Galtung has defined three different types of violence. We only tend to see the first form, but the two others are not less grave or harmful.

Firstly, there is the **direct violence**, which refers to visible forms of violence, like beating or sexual abuse. It might be exerted in public or more discretely, but it is a tangible form of violence with a concrete perpetrator, and it is usually easy to define.

Secondly, there is **structural violence**, which can be defined as structures in society that prevent people from realizing their full potential or from enjoying their human rights. This form of violence does not have a clear perpetrator, but is manifested through exploitation and abuse built into our norms, laws, systems, institutions, social hierarchy, political systems, and economic status.

In the case of our girl, the lack of





money in the family is a manifestation of structural violence.

Thirdly, there is **cultural violence**, which can be defined as any aspect of a culture that can be used to justify or legitimize violence in its direct or structural forms, and to inhibit or suppress the response of the victims. It does not directly kill or deprive from rights, yet it is harmful because it normalizes violence, and makes it acceptable and even needed. In the case of the girl, the belief that she will not be able to go to university and that motherhood is not possible to combine with being a doctor, is a form of cultural violence.

These different forms of violence can be illustrated as an iceberg floating in water. The direct violence is the tip that is visible above the surface, while the structural violence is the large part that lies under water, more difficult to detect but not less harmful. The cultural violence can be seen as the cold water, upholding the iceberg and making sure it doesn't melt.

In order to counter different manifestations of violence in society, it therefore becomes very important to find means to challenge the cultural violence. For example, a wife that is beaten by her husband, a clear example of direct violence,

might be convinced by her family and peers that the beating is a sign that her husband loves and cares about her. Or she can be told that religion or tradition gives her husband the right to beat her, and that a good wife should bear such forms of abuse with patience. Another example is the practice of early marriage, which is illegitimized by law in a number of countries, yet practiced widely. Such practice has aspects of both direct and structural violence, and is upheld and sustained by cultural violence that justifies and normalizes it. Arguments are grounded in traditions, understanding of religion, or even understanding of science. Such arguments could be that early marriage is good for the girl, in order to protect and guarantee her “purity”, or that it’s a religiously justified practice, or that girls grow up and mature faster than boys.

This theoretical framework is very

useful when doing a context analysis for Church engagement in society such as project planning. These questions can be guiding in analysing the different forms of violence:

1. What kind of violence do we see on direct and structural level?
2. What cultural violence can we identify that justify the direct and structural violence?
3. What methods can be used in order to challenge the violence on these different levels?

For a more extensive example of the different forms of violence against women, please see the case study about FGM below. Try to read it through the lenses of the theory of different forms of violence.

## Case Study

# Female Genital Mutilation

**ONE EXAMPLE OF** gendered violence is Female genital mutilation (FGM). This practice is very painful and is a violation of the rights of the girl child for the rest of her life, with physical, psychological and sexual effect and a much higher risk to health and life at child birth.

The actual act of FGM is a manifestation of direct violence. Someone

has decided that the cut should be made, someone is making the cut, and someone is likely holding the child by force. It results in physical as well as psychological damage with lifelong consequences for the individual.

At the same time FGM is a good example of structural violence. In many societies and communities there are

social structures that make it almost impossible for a girl who has not gone through FGM to get married. In a situation where women are economically dependent on men the cut may be seen as a necessity. When looking at FGM as structural violence, we cannot identify a perpetrator but only structures that uphold this violence.

So, we have a clear manifestation of direct violence and structures that uphold the practice of FGM. What is more difficult to see is the cultural violence that justifies the structural and direct violence towards girls and women that is manifested through FGM. These cultural aspects include beliefs about female sexuality and the function of FGM as a rite of passage into womanhood. Even though FGM is not supported by either Islam or Christianity, religion is also used to justify the practice. Thus, if we want to end this unacceptable violation of girls' and women's rights we need to make an analysis where all the aspects of violence are covered. Then we may design our work to effectively meet and prevent the different forms of violence that FGM represents.

An example of how FGM can be addressed can be found in a project implemented by one of PMU's partners. The project began with a dialogue in the

targeted communities about cultural beliefs and ideas, and how these could be transformed to support the rights of girls and women instead of violating them. The dialogue led to the conclusion that new initiation ceremonies, excluding the practice of FGM, needed to be created to celebrate the girls' entering into womanhood. In relation to this they are also working with role models, i.e. adult women from the community who has not gone through FGM and their husbands. Another important aspect of the work has been to work with young boys and men in order to discuss the norm about FGM as a condition for marriage. Right Clubs in schools are important platforms for the project activities, this since they bring pupils of all ages together. They are also working with economic empowerment groups in order to reach parents. To find income generating activities as alternative to performing FGM is key for a sustainable result. The organisation is now working on different levels and with different target groups in order to cover all the different dimensions of violence in FGM.



# Privilege, Discrimination and Gender Stereotypes

**PRIVILEGE MEANS THAT** some people in society are advantaged over others. These advantages can be based on gender, ethnicity, age, or other ground. It might be difficult for those in a privileged position to discover the benefits they enjoy, and the unequal structures supporting these benefits. Have you ever heard someone saying

“discrimination does not exist, because I have not experienced it”? This is actually a very common way to argue, but not a very convincing one.

There is a Chinese proverb that says that “the fish are the last to discover the Ocean”. Applied in this context, this means that a man might not see how women are discriminated in society,



or a white person might be blind to racism, because they don't experience it. A person who is perfectly able to walk will need a lot of imagination to understand how difficult it is for a person in a wheelchair to get around in the city. However, the fact that one or many individuals are not experiencing a certain thing does not mean that this thing does not exist. Therefore, we need to start looking at our own privileges in order to discover discrimination.

In society we often see discrimination based on gender. While sex refers to the biological differences between women and men, i.e. women can give birth and men cannot. Gender refers to our *ideas* about how we *should be* as men and women. This results in stereotype roles that limit the opportunities of both women and men. It could be ideas about how we should dress, what kind of movies and music we should like, what kind of food we should eat or what characteristics we should have. It is also ideas about what we should do,

for examples ideas about how women should be "home-loving" and men "breadwinners", ideas about what jobs are suitable for men and women, what crops should be grown by women and men and what roles to have in Church.

Gender roles and expectations are not static but change over time and between different places. Also in Church, stereotype gender roles are limiting us, even though it is not something Biblical. As we have seen above, the story of creation says nothing about woman being created with certain gender specific traits which make her different from man. Neither is there any hint about women and men being given different roles or responsibilities. On the contrary, Genesis emphasizes that woman and man were created in God's image as equals. Therefore, as Christians, we should do everything we can to challenge limiting gender roles, fight discrimination and restore relationships and equality between women and men.

## Questions to reflect upon

- When are you a fish? I.e. when are you privileged?
- What kind of gendered stereotypes can you identify in your context?
- What can you do in your everyday life to challenge limiting gender roles and fight discrimination?

## Equality Starts with Us

**ALL RELATIONSHIPS ARE** somehow defined by power, thus in all human interactions we need to deal with power. By being conscious about the ways we use and relate to power, we can actively take part in shaping the culture of our churches and society.

“How can you say to your brother, ‘Brother, let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when you yourself fail to see the plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.” (Luke 6:42)

We have seen above that it is difficult to identify our own privileges in society. In the same way, it can be a challenge to see the speck in our own eyes when

it comes to the way we use power.

As a way to identify destructive and unhealthy ways of using power, the Norwegian social psychologist Berit Ås has identified seven *master suppression techniques* (further described in next chapter). A master suppression technique is a strategy used to gain and maintain power at the expense of others, by making them feel inferior, unworthy or ridiculed. When people in an organisation feel these things, it will not bear good fruit. Rather, we would like people to feel strengthened, happy, and creative in a way that will make the organisation thrive.

Some people will consciously use master suppression techniques to gain influence over other people. But more



importantly, many of us use them unconsciously. We might be unsecure about our own position, thus trying to assert ourselves at the expense of others. Or we might have learned to use these strategies by mimicking other people, without thinking about the consequences they might bring. This is why it is so important to begin by looking at ourselves in relation to these techniques. This means that when choosing strategies to influence we should choose humility.

At the same time, being aware of the

### When choosing strategies to influence – choose humility

master suppression techniques could help us to identify situations where other people are using these techniques to make us, or people around us, feel inferior, unworthy or ridiculed. If this

happens, there are counter strategies that can be used to meet them.

These strategies

are presented together with the master suppression techniques below. In the next section, you will find seven validation techniques that will help us change our own behaviour and participate in the building of a peaceful culture.

## Seven Master Suppression Techniques and Counter Strategies

**1 Make invisible.** To make invisible is to marginalize people by ignoring them. When somebody speaks in a meeting, we may, for example, start talking to a colleague beside us or read our papers instead of listening.

**Counter strategy: Claim the space.** Claim the space by asking questions or stating facts. For example: “Could the two of you, please, stop talking while I am presenting?” or “I find it difficult to make this presentation when you are reading your papers at the same time”.

**2 Ridicule.** When we ridicule, we portray persons, or their arguments, in a ridiculing fashion. Instead of listening to what a person says, we may laugh at his or her accent and compare it to a funny character in a TV-series.

**Counter strategy: Question.** Question why the joker thinks this is funny when clearly people could be hurt.

**3 Withhold information.** By withholding information, we exclude people from the decision making

process, or make them less able to make an informed decision and take part in a work process. Important decisions may, for instance, be taken during informal meetings in somebody's home, to which everyone is not invited.

**Counter strategy: Cards on the table.** Ask for cards on the table by pointing out that you have not been given all the information.

**4 Double bind.** To double bind is to punish or otherwise belittle the actions of a person, regardless of how they act. A woman who cannot attend to a late meeting because she wants to spend time with her children is blamed for neglecting her work. The next time, when she comes to the meeting and leaves the kids at home with their father, she is called a bad mother and wife. Either way she is punished.

**Counter strategy: Break free of the pattern.** Break free by asking for clear directions and by informing people about your priorities.

**5 Heap blame/put to shame.** When people point out a problem, we may respond by embarrassing them, or insinuating that they are themselves to blame. A person may complain about not having been informed about a meeting, but is being told that he or she should have checked the office calendar and that others can't be expected to keep him/her informed. A woman may be told that if she had worn more modest clothes, she would not have been sexually harassed.

**Counter strategy: Intellectualize.**

Try to distance yourself from your feelings and reflect upon why you feel shame or feel that you are to blame. How would someone else see the situation?

**6 Objectify.** When we objectify, we discuss or name a person's appearance in a situation where this is irrelevant. For example, when a female speaker is presented to an audience, the focus is often directed towards her beauty, and not towards her knowledge.

**Counter strategy: Question.** Question how your appearance, or what you or somebody else is wearing, is relevant in the situation.

**7 Force/threat of force.** The use or threat of physical force is also a suppression technique. Threats may appear in many different ways. Often, it happens off the record, when no one else sees.

**Counter strategy: Inform.** Talk to someone else in your organisation and let them know what is going on.

Since Berit Ås defined these seven master suppression techniques, more techniques have been added to the list. Some of these include preceding a request for somebody to do something with excessive praise, in order to make it difficult for that person to say no, or to dismiss a person by saying he or she is too old/young to understand the issue. Maybe you can think of other techniques as well.

# Building a Peaceful Culture

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. (Gal 5:22–23, The Bible)

32

A **FAIR AND** righteous approach to power starts and ends with love, generosity and serving. When we become aware of our ways of using master suppression techniques, we may consciously try to change our behaviour to be more constructive. The Bible gives us tools and principles that should guide our interactions as followers of Christ, regardless of ethnicity, gender or background. The validation techniques listed below is one way of describing these tools. The first five ones are directly related to the first five master suppression techniques above.

**Validate.** Make sure everyone is being seen and listened to. Greet all participants before a meeting. Be respectful when you claim your space and position. Don't interrupt, and don't talk to others or read your papers when somebody is speaking.

**Show respect.** Listen to one another in a sincere manner, show interest. If you don't understand, ask questions. Information is often given from one perspective. By asking respectful questions, we help each other to see

other perspectives and to gain a better collective understanding.

**Provide information.** Act professionally in the way you communicate. Make sure not to withhold or to forget to share information. Always choose transparency and honesty.

**Reward people twice.** Think positively about people you interact with, assume that they are doing their best. Strive to confirm positive behaviour instead of criticizing things you find negative. If people make choices you don't understand, ask why, and be prepared to listen to the answer.

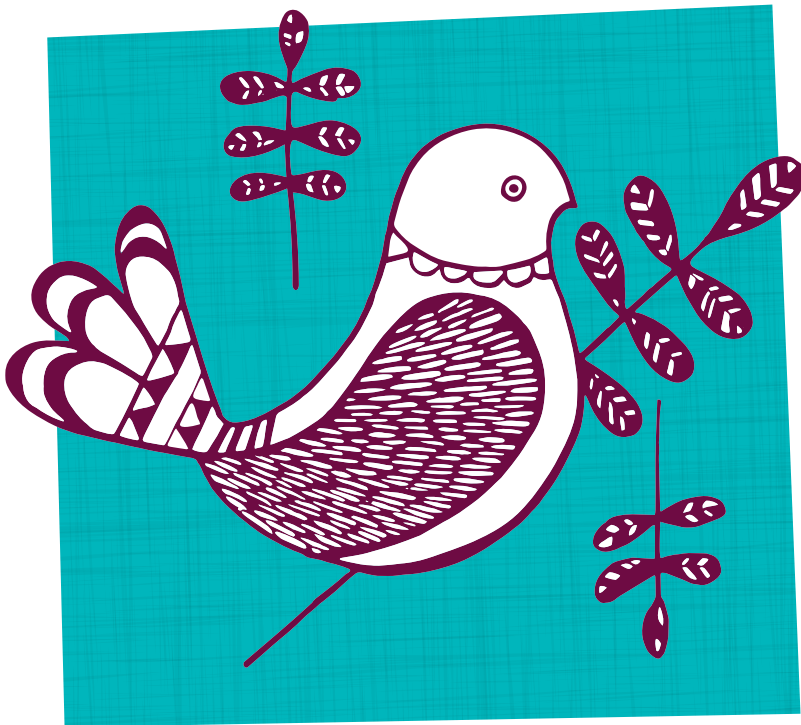
**Confirm reasonable standards.** Try to understand people's reasons and motivations for making the choices they make. Don't assume they want to provoke or create problems. Communicate about standards and responsibilities in the organisation or within the group, make sure that all parts agree and have the same understanding about what to expect from each other.

**Treat others as equals.** You may have different positions within your organisation or within society. But even if a person is your subordinate in the organisational or societal hierarchy, remember he or she is always your equal as a human being and deserves respect.

**If somebody uses suppression techniques towards you or another person,** try to point out what you see in a calm and respectful manner. The person may not be aware that he or

she is being suppressive. Often, just putting into words what you see and thus making the suppressive behaviour visible can go a long way. Power abuse is often allowed to go on because people are silently accepting it.

You will find an exercise on identifying suppression techniques, using counter strategies and validation techniques for a peaceful culture on p. 60.



# Let Every Gift Thrive

BY BECOMING CONSCIOUS about how we act and behave towards each other, we can strive to create a culture that makes every gift thrive. This is a culture where everybody's gifts and abilities are valued, and where nobody is being prevented, by structures or hierarchies, from reaching their full potential.

“Blessed are the peacemakers, For they shall be called the children of God.” (Matt 5:9). In the Sermon of the Mount, Jesus shares the blessings and challenges us in many important areas of our lives.

**34**

When He says:

“Blessed are the peacemakers” in the verse above, does He say that we should never

be involved in conflict? No, look again at the word being used. Jesus is not saying “Blessed are the *peaceful*”. He talks about being a *peace-maker*, someone who actively works for peace.

Even God is involved in conflicts. As we saw in the section about different forms of violence, we sometimes need

to challenge the status quo in order to transform a society into a more peaceful and fair place for everyone. When working with gender equality and issues of power, there is a risk of conflict, because some people may see their own privileges being threatened. Thus, being a peacemaker is not about avoiding conflict, but about handling conflict in a constructive way.

There is no verse in the Bible that says that conflicts can be prayed away. But we are promised that if we pray to God

for wisdom, He will give us the wisdom we need.

“If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God,

who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.” (James 1:5)

With God's wisdom and filled with his love, you will be able to travel far as a peacemaker. You may set a new culture, a kingdom culture.

**Blessed are the peacemakers,  
For they shall be called the  
children of God – *The Bible***



# Gender Mainstreaming

**IF WE REALLY** want to work for and achieve gender equality we need to take gender into account in all aspects of the work of our organisations. Gender mainstreaming is to bring gender into the core business of an organisation. When mainstreamed, gender is considered in all decisions and all actions that are taken. This means both internal decisions in our Churches and organisations and decisions in our external actions, like development projects and humanitarian action.

The base for gender mainstreaming is having knowledge about our gender theory and what the Bible says about gender equality (see part I). When we know this we will be able to look at different situations with “gender lenses”. This basically means to look at situations from a gender perspective, to be able to see what happens around us in terms of inequality and equality. For example, when designing a project, either development or humanitarian, we need to be aware of how gender relations are affected in this specific project and how the project is affecting gender relations.

Gender mainstreaming is important in all types of projects, regardless of the main focus of the project. In one country

where PMU has been working for many years we have had very interesting discussions with our partner when working with children’s rights. How are our ideas about men and women influencing a project working with children’s rights? Well, one example is that in this country, girls are considered to be women at the age of 12–16, while boys are not considered men until they are 18.<sup>7</sup> The fact that girls may be forced to marry and give birth to children at the age of twelve is of course a huge violation of children’s rights. But if these girls are considered to be women by the local communities we might miss this in our analysis. So, it became apparent that when working with children’s rights it is very important to know what the ideas about gender and age are in the local context. In this case it became apparent that in order to work with children’s rights there was a need for community dialogue on ideas about gender.

In another case, PMU was supporting a humanitarian project, with food distribution to internally displaced people as a main component. When distributing food in a crisis the usual way is to include the most vulnerable people and distribute food through a

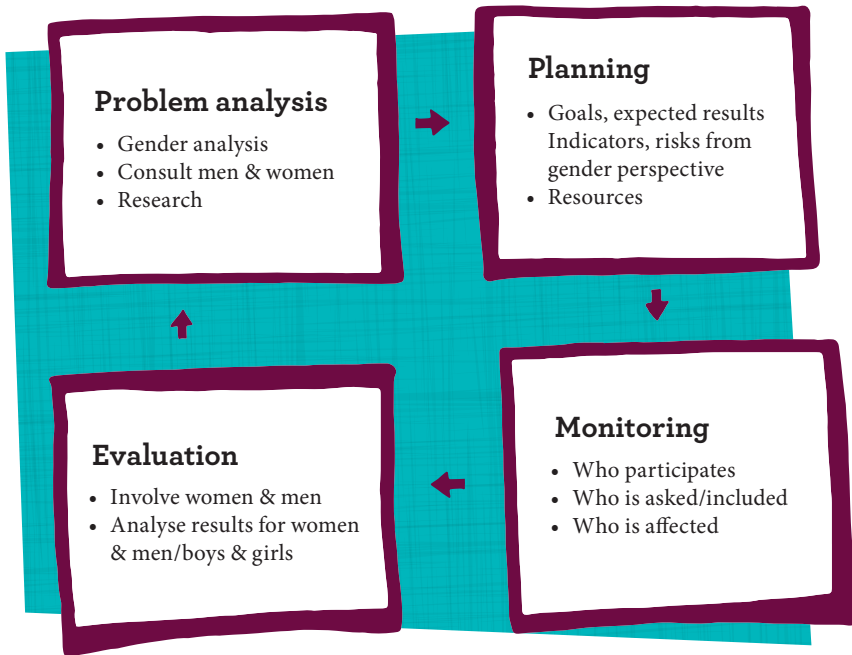
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<sup>7</sup> According to the law, girls as well as boys are considered children until their 18th birthday.

pick up location where people come to pick up the food baskets. In this case the implementing organisation made a thorough analysis of the target group to see what different groups it consisted of. In the target groups there were many different kinds of households. There were male headed, female headed and child headed households or households with family members living with disabilities. In the analysis it became clear that these different households had very different possibilities to come to the pick up location. For some of the households, there was a walk of a few kilometers to the pick up location and this meant that a single woman or man

might have difficulties in leaving young children alone in order to go to the location. Similarly, a person living with disabilities could neither come nor carry the food basket. In some cases the road was dangerous and women were extra vulnerable to sexual abuse on the road. In the case of child headed households the food packages were sometimes too heavy for a child to carry. This analysis clearly showed that the most vulnerable people would not have equal access to the food distributions as they had different possibilities of *actually accessing it*. This resulted in alternative solutions, for example smaller food packages that were easier to carry, and delivery of food

## Gender perspective in PME&R



packages directly to the home in those cases where the beneficiary was not able to come to the pick up location. This example shows how important it is to make a thorough analysis of the different opportunities that the target group has to actually benefit from the project on equal terms.

A good gender analysis is also very important when it comes to follow up and evaluation. In one case PMU was financing a project to drill boreholes in a community where water was scarce and the population had to walk very far for water. The gender analysis showed that women and girls were responsible for collecting water, which took them about ten hours of work every day, while the men and boys were responsible for bringing the cattle to the pasture. This meant that the men and boys were often gone for days with the cattle. For both girls and boys this situation meant that they could not go to school. So, one

positive effect of this project was that when they had drilled boreholes closer to their community, the walk to get water was dramatically reduced from ten hours to 30 minutes at most. Also, the new water points made it possible for the cattle to get water closer to the community. This resulted in girls and boys being able to go back to school because now there was time to collect water and care for the cattle as well as going to school. This is a very good and important result that could have been missed if the implementing organisation had not made a proper gender analysis to follow up on.

Thus, we need to keep our gender lenses on at all time, during planning, monitoring, evaluation and reporting, to make sure that no project or other intervention is gender blind. See page 65 for an example of a gender analysis that can be used when planning a project.

## Checklist for gender mainstreaming in project design

This is a checklist that can help us make sure that gender has been mainstreamed. It is a good enough or minimum list, which means that we could use it to check that we have not missed anything essential – but we should not limit ourselves to this but reach further to improve.

- Gender analysis is carried out.
- The results of the analysis are influencing the project design.
- At least one goal and one indicator is targeting gender equality specifically.
- Data and indicators are divided by gender when possible.
- Monitoring and evaluation makes it possible to follow up on results in gender equality.

# Working Transformatively to Challenge Limiting Gender Roles

**AS WE HAVE** seen above, gender refers to *ideas* about how we *should be* as men and women and they result in stereotype roles that limit the opportunities of both women and men. However, too often “gender” has been used as synonymous with “women”, also in development work we have been focusing a lot on empowering women, working with women’s access to education and resources and to support women’s entrepreneurship. This is of course important work, but we seem to forget that we also have ideas about how men should be. These ideas are limiting boys and men as well as girls and women. For example, in many parts of the world, men are not expected to be caring for and spend time with their children. This results in poor relationships between fathers and their children. The idea that a man should be the breadwinner can result in conflicts in cases where the man is not able to fulfil this role, while the woman is working and providing for the family. In such a case the woman will likely also be expected to take care of all the tasks at home, because men are not expected to do that, which will double her workload. This means that there is a great need to address not only women’s

lack of access to resources, but also to work transformatively with gender roles and social expectations on men as well as women.

So, how can we work transformatively and challenge the gender roles that limit us? Magdalene Kelel, project leader at Free Pentecostal Fellowship in Kenya, says on p. 47 that the main strategy in her work for gender equality on community level is to create space for dialogue where men and women can meet to discuss their ideas about gender. She emphasizes the need for women and men to discuss this together, which is very important. Sometimes it can also be a good strategy for men to talk with other men and for women to talk with other women. There are very successful examples of men coming together to discuss what it means for them to be men, to be fathers and husbands and what they dream of. When coming together it is easier to support each other to make a change in behaviour.

## Questions to reflect upon

- What ideas do you have about how men and women should be?
- What can you do in your everyday life to challenge limiting gender roles?

# Follow Up and Evaluation of Gender Equality Work

**FOR MANY REASONS** it is always important to follow up and evaluate the activities that we do. We evaluate in order to learn more and to make sure that things turn out the way we planned. Evaluation is also important in order to keep each other responsible for developing our organisations, projects and activities. Also when it comes to gender equality work it is important with evaluation.

In order to get the most out of the evaluation it is important to follow up on the project or activity while it is on-going. In this way we can identify if there is a need to make adjustments or changes in order to reach the goals.

In an evaluation we can ask questions about goals, time plan, how resources have been used, and what challenges we face. What have we achieved so far? What have we learned? What needs to be changed?

To make the most of the evaluation there are different methods that can be used. One way is to use statistics, for example how many women and how many men do we find in leadership positions, and on the board? It is also possible to follow up and evaluate by studying what is going on in meetings or services in Church. For example we can pay attention to who is speaking and how much time is given to a male or a female speaker.

### **Evaluation – why has this happened?**

In an evaluation it is important to reflect upon what has happened, how it happened and why it happened. This is important both to make a closure of the project in question, but also to open up the discussion about the next phase, for new activities or projects.

### Reflect upon the goals in the gender equality work

Did we succeed in reaching our goal within the given time frame, and did it give us the effect that we hoped for? If we did not reach a goal, make sure to reflect upon why. A goal that was reached with success will also tell us something about how to work with goals in the future.

To work with evaluation is also about *how* we reached the goal. How was the working process? It is important to focus on what went well and how we can bring in more of that in future projects. To work in a positive manner, trying to identify what went well, is often a good way to find good solutions and ideas for the future.

### What is important to evaluate?

There are many aspects that are important to evaluate in order to develop our work. Here follow a few examples:

- Goals and results – did we reach the goals we had set up? What are our lessons learned?
- Process – what has worked well in our work? What changes do we need to make?
- Organisation – how have we distributed responsibilities and tasks?
- Personally – what have I learned? Have I developed and grown personally?
- Externally – What kind of difference have we made for our community? What value have we created?

## A personal evaluation

In order to follow your personal development and to learn for the future you can also ask yourself a few questions that open up for reflection.

- What should I keep on doing?
- What should I do more of?
- What should I do less of?
- What should I stop doing?
- What should I start doing?

PART 4

# STORIES





## Jane Angom

Pentecostal ministries  
of Uganda

Project leader of Adult  
Literacy project and  
Board member

### “We need to increase the number of women leaders in Church”

#### What motivates you to work for gender equality?

My motivation to work with gender equality is derived from two fronts.

The first one is that the highly patriarchal society in Uganda is just unfair. Sadly, many proponents of this society do not even know that it is unfair to women because the injustices have repeatedly been done and now seem normal. Some do know, and they just enjoy it. Sad!

Secondly, I believe there is a rare kind of democracy in Church that needs to be interrogated. In this arrangement, the biggest majority of Church goers and believers are the women, yet they are led by the minority in the setup, the men,

and this is accepted because of structural issues and Biblical interpretations. Holistic development requires that all of society is involved. I believe that we need to work towards increasing the number of women in Church leadership as well as having the right representation in leadership spaces for youth and persons with disabilities, even in the Church arena.

#### Why should everyone care about gender equality?

Everyone should care about gender equality because inclusion is the only way to have sustainable development. More than half of the population in the world is women. This greater half ought



to be included at all levels of decision making and participation in life for three main reasons.

Firstly, gender equality is a moral obligation. It's just the right thing to do. If God created man and woman as equals, who are we to think and act otherwise? "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:28).

Secondly, women bring a whole new perspective to things. By virtue of who they are, women's aspirations and priorities are very important. They like to preserve the good and savor the same from all situations. Preserving means sustainable!

Thirdly, women interface with natural resources much more and are affected by climate change in a more palpable way than men. As women fulfill their unpaid tasks of providing food for their families, especially in rural settings, they need water, firewood, and farmland. These elements have to be used in a sustainable way.

### What is your advice to someone who wants to start working for gender equality?

Gender equality is a field full of misconceptions. Many people think it is only about working for women. With this preconception, a lot of people have already made up their minds that you are wrong before you even spoke the first word. You are bound to be run over and you will get hurt to your core. Do not fight back with words. Allow for time

to pass and keep bringing up the issue. Explain the fact that gender equality is a good thing, it's not robbing men off their power as many fear, rather it's seeking to have same opportunities for both men and women and a call to work together.

To get people to change their attitudes and perception takes time. Have a community of peers from whom you seek counsel, learn the best practices and sometimes cry together. Read as much as you can and try to understand the context in which you are working so that you are not out of context and order yourself.

### What have been effective strategies to work with gender equality in your Organisation?

Knowing that it takes time to get people to change attitudes has helped us. We are patient. Over time, we have explained the importance of working together to the organisation leadership. Once given opportunity to do certain things, we have encouraged ourselves as women to execute the assignment(s) with excellence. This way, women have been listened to, and more opportunities have been opened up for the women.

Let me say this, right now what happens is this; for a woman to receive credit for work done, they have to work twice as hard as it compared to men! Of course this is just one of the injustices the women are subjected too.

### What is the biggest challenge that you see in your work for gender equality?

The biggest challenge is misconception,

biases and rigidity. For the promoter of gender equality, there are so many barriers to break, misconceptions to undress and biases to overcome! First you need to raise awareness that there is such a concept as injustice due to gender disparity, then point out the arguments for gender equality before anybody steps towards a more equal society can be taken.

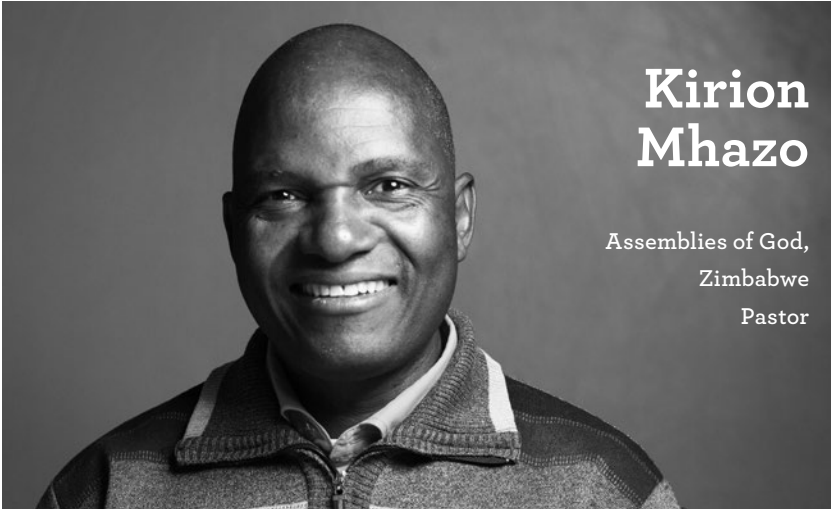
The gender inequalities are so deeply rooted in culture and practice. Unfortunately, several men and women do not see any problems or inequalities at play in day to day life, much as there are many manifestations of inequalities. This is largely a result of socialization and cultural influence. A sad example that comes to mind is that there are women who believe that it's ok for their husbands to beat them up when they are at fault because that is a sign of love. What a lie! This lie, and many others,

disempowers the woman who is not aware that domestic violence in the form of spouse battering is an injustice that should never happen.

As present, there are two phases to working with gender equality that needs to be addressed.

Firstly, the women themselves have been socialized to believe that culture is correct, good and must be respected without question. That said, if any injustice against women is entrenched in cultural practices the women are happy to accept it. So, a lot of work in the area of unlearning needs to be done among and with the women.

Secondly, the general beliefs among men – as well as the rest of society – about gender equality and the agenda of proponents of gender equality, are often riddled with biases. A lot of work is needed to address these biases.



## Kirion Mhazo

Assemblies of God,  
Zimbabwe  
Pastor

### “Without gender equality the church will not reach its full potential”

**45**

#### What motivates you to work for gender equality?

My motivation comes primarily from my theological studies and my understanding of the Word of God. In the Bible I see that God does not support unfairness or inequality in any form and gender is no exception from this.

#### Why should everyone care about gender equality?

Everyone should care about gender equality because it is the right thing to do and it is supported by the Word of God. If women are not included the Church will not reach its full potential, but when women are included and

allowed to participate fully, the Church will be enriched through everyone's talents and gifts.

#### What is the biggest challenge that you see in your work for gender equality?

The biggest challenge is to deal with the traditions and cultures which have been accepted in the Churches and communities and which are not supporting gender equality. The church has wrongly excluded women from holding positions as pastors, elders and deacons for many years, but finally this is starting to change gradually.

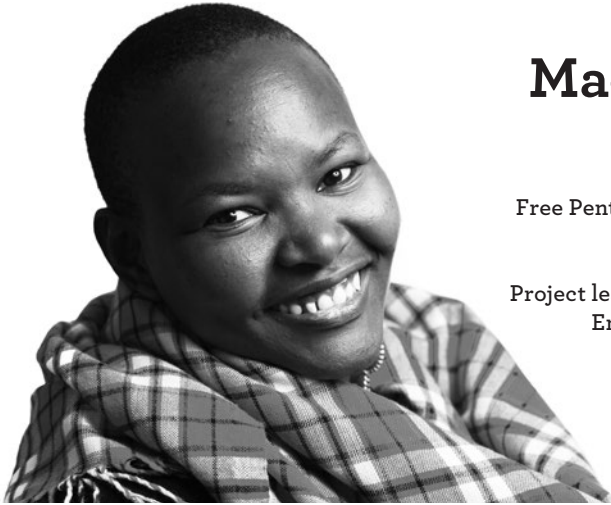
**What is your advice to someone who wants to start working for gender equality?**

To change long rooted cultures requires patience and cannot happen immediately, thus to give it time and commitment is very important, and not to give up. You may also need to involve different people and advocate towards key individuals.

**What have been effective strategies to work with gender equality in your Church?**

Through my position in the national leadership of Assemblies of God in Zimbabwe I have been able to influence and contribute to changes in the way we view female leadership. Today it is possible for women to be pastors, elders and deacons in Assemblies of God.

There is still a gender imbalance and a long way to go, but this shows that it is possible to change attitudes and views.



# Magdalene Kelel

Free Pentecostal Fellowship  
in Kenya

Project leader of Gender and  
Environment Project

## “My heart is on fire to make women’s world different”

47

### What motivates you to work for gender equality?

I grew up in a culture where women’s voices were not heard. I was told my worth was tied up in being a good mother and wife. Working outside the home is a task reserved for men and therefore a social taboo for women. I was fortunate to escape and pursue a career and gain financial independence. When I think of a lot of women in my community and their situations, of the ambitions they never dared to have, my hearts get on fire with energy to make their world different. That they can dare to dream and be everything they could be.

### Why should everyone care about gender equality?

Gender inequality is at the core of poverty in the world. If we want to change the story of the future generations then we need to change how their world is defined. No one should be constrained in the boxes of “you are a girl” or “you are a boy”. Every girl and boy should be given the freedom to be everything they could be.

### What is your advice to someone who wants to start working for gender equality?

To understand the context of the place they are working in and try to bridge the gender gap in this place.

**What have been effective strategies to work with gender equality in the project you work with?**

The main strategy is creating community conversations. In the target communities, both genders meet, discuss and identify the gaps, stereotypes, myths and inequality that exist where they live. Together they try to find solutions and issues that need to shift to achieve equality. Women have been discriminated for a long time and hence the project empowers women to have the capacity to dream and achieve their dreams.

**What is the biggest challenge that you see in your work for gender equality?**

The inequality present in the community is entrenched from an early socialization process, which makes it hard to change. The process of change is slow. Another key challenge is that gender challenges, like gender based violence, is seen as a problem for women to solve. Women participate in upholding the tradition, which makes the conversation difficult as women will not come out and discuss the problem. They carry the guilt and pain.

A strong cultural system that supports gender inequality is a key challenge too. To achieve a cultural shift and put in place systems, policies and laws that will ensure equality is not easy.



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## “Gender Equality should be on everyones agenda”

49

### What motivates you to work for gender equality?

I derive my motivation mainly from two sources: the conviction that God is not happy with gender biased system and from the fact that this unequal system is changing. God must be very sad when a human being created in his own image is treated badly, denied justice, love and care. I believe that He would be even more sad when we overlook or don't care about such things. Therefore by challenging this unequal system and promoting gender equality I hope to contribute to peaceful and just society and please God. This is also a way of being his steward on this earth. Similarly, the gender biased system and patriarchal

mindset are changing at different scale worldwide. Different people in different time have given their sweat and toil to contribute to this change. This signifies that change is destined to come if we act with perseverance and conviction. This gives me hope and motivation to continue working for gender equality.

### Why should everyone care about gender equality?

There is both sociological and theological reason for everyone to care about gender equality. For the believers, it is a mandate for the church to act justly and walk humbly before God. Discrimination based on gender is unjust. If we love God then we must love

and treat everyone fairly. Those who do not believe in God must also care about gender equality because it is a matter of human rights. By denying this right or overlooking the violation of this right we will be promoting a society of injustice, violence and hatred. This will affect everyone and no one can escape from its negative consequences. Therefore if we want to live in a good society, we must care for gender equality – the personal is political. Gender equality is an agenda of everyone: men, women, girls, boys or people with other gender identity. While women are the worst affected group men also suffer tremendously from the gender inequality. For example men are not free to express their painful emotions openly in a patriarchal system. Their identity of “masculinity” will be questioned. This has held men captive emotionally and psychologically which is very harmful. Therefore unless this unequal system is changed men will also not be able to exercise their human rights fully.

### What is the biggest challenge that you see in your work for gender equality?

There are several challenges in our work for gender equality. As we work in partnerships the priorities of different partners are different and not always coherent to promoting gender equality. The communities we work with are very diverse and gender issues are complex. Therefore it is a challenge to be creative and innovative to tackle those issues effectively. However, the biggest challenge

is to bring about change in the mindset in true sense. Among development practitioners gender has become a buzz word. As a result many so called “gender actions” end up simply in counting men and women, boys and girls. They fail to address the core problems that reinforce unequal gender systems and practices. People having shallow understanding of gender issues often do not see value in sensitization activities because they think they know it all. To overcome this mindset is a big challenge in the workplace. In communities, when the unequal behaviour become visible to people, to live out a gender just life is a big challenge because it is mostly countercultural.

### What is your advice to someone who wants to start working for gender equality?

Firstly, gender equality is both a value and a lifestyle. It has to start from oneself. We are all gendered people. It is ingrained deeply in our mindset. Gender equality starts by having the right mindset about people of all gender, to know that God loves everyone and we are all created in His likeness with abilities and gifts. If God does not discriminate we have no right to do so. Secondly, gender system manifest in different forms in different contexts. Often it is rooted into deep beliefs, values and culture. Long term strategies are needed rather than quick fix approach. Therefore conviction, perseverance and patience are highly necessary to see meaningful and lasting change in gender equality.



### What have been effective strategies to work with gender equality in your Organisation?

We have realized that simultaneous action at mind and system levels are necessary to effect change in behaviour. Only educating and sensitizing people about gender inequality and its consequences do not produce lasting impact. It has to be sustained by institutionalization through appropriate policies, structures and systems. On the other hand change in policy, system and structures without working to change people's mindset is not going to be effective. It simply ends up into compliance rather than behaviour change. When actions are done both at mind and system level, they complement each other to create behaviour change and

sustain the change. In our organisation we first focused more on developing policies, implementation plans and putting in structures for gender mainstreaming in all our work. We didn't focus much at raising awareness and changing mindset. It didn't work. When we realized this, we organised sensitization workshops followed by developing action plans to implement existing policies and structures. This has worked well and is beginning to make difference. The action plan should come from the people and team themselves should be allowed to be developed organically. Therefore strategy to engage mind, system and action hand in hand has been effective in our organisational context.



PART 5

# TOOLBOX FOR DIALOGUE AND ACTION



In this part you will find exercises that will help to start the discussion about gender inequality and equality, and other exercises that will help you to plan your work for improved gender equality. You can use all the exercises or just pick the ones that you think is most relevant for your work. But first a few words about the role of the facilitator.

## Guidelines for Workshop Facilitators

**AS A FACILITATOR** your role is to help the group move forward. You are not necessarily there as an expert on the topic of the discussion or training but rather to make sure that everyone is heard, that the space is safe and that the conversation is respectful.

### Rules

Before introducing any exercises that you have planned, you need to check that you agree on a few basic rules. Let the participants discuss the following questions in pairs:

- How would we like the atmosphere to be in this workshop?
- When we interact, what do we think is important to agree upon in order for every one to feel safe sharing?
- Are there any other rules that we would like to agree upon before we start?

If time is limited, you could suggest some rules to agree upon. Simple rules to agree on could be:

- Everyone in the room is allowed to finish what they want to say.
- Phones should be off.
- We do not laugh at each other, but with each other.
- What has been said here, stays here. (May be important in some workshops, but not in all. If this rule is necessary to make everyone feel safe and enjoy the workshop, then it is needed.)
- Nothing that is said should be valued as stupid or ridiculous, everyone's contribution is equally important and respected.

### Trigger warning

When having a workshop on difficult issues we can expect people to find it difficult. Discussions about gender can

be sensitive, personal and cultural, and it is also about identity. Old wounds and trauma may come up and we need to be prepared for that and ready to handle it. A suggestion is to point this out in the beginning of a workshop where these issues will be discussed. For example you can say:

*This session can be very sensitive depending on your background and past experiences. As I don't personally know all of you and what you experienced this session may bring up past experiences and emotions that are uncomfortable. It is not the intention of this session to offend or bring up personal issues and if you feel like you need to leave the session at any point, please feel free to do this. Also, if this session brings up experiences that you need to deal more help with, then I would suggest that you talk to someone you trust as quickly as possible. We are diving deep into our cultures and our cultures make up a large part of our worldviews and our identities.*

### **Create a warm atmosphere**

All participants should be allowed to present themselves. It could be done by just letting everyone say their name and something short about themselves. You may help them by giving them a question to answer, for example:

- What are you thankful for today?
- Tell us something about a person you look up to (a role model)?
- If you were an animal, which animal would you prefer to be? And why?

- If you got a free ticket to a new place in the world, where would you like to go?
- What are your expectations on this workshop?

Example of introduction:

*Before we start, we would like all of you to introduce yourselves with your name and the answer to this question: –What are your expectations on this workshop? (Allow one minute to think before starting presentations.)*

If all participants know each other already, just ask them to answer one of the questions above.

### **Take care of learning outcomes**

Provide all participants with a white paper or a notebook and a pen and encourage them to write down things they learn or things they are reminded of during the workshop. It is also a good place for writing down questions, which can then be saved to a later point in the workshop. To save time, it might be practical to leave all questions to the end of the workshop, but this is up to the facilitator to decide.

### **Questions**

As a facilitator, your most important role is to help the group to create a space for open reflection. Asking questions is a powerful tool in doing that. Let your questions be open and not closed. Closed questions are questions which can be answered by yes or no. Open questions often demand a reflected answer, which is good. Open questions invite us to tell

stories, help us to think and motivate ourselves. We learn both by talking, formulating our own thoughts, and by listening to others. It is important for the facilitator to make sure that all

participants are heard and that no one is silenced or chooses to be silent. Support the group to have a participative and including conversation.



## Workshop Exercises

### **Exercise: WHAT IS FEMININE AND WHAT IS MASCULINE?**

**Objective:** To illustrate that what differentiates men from women is biology, and that gender is our ideas about how we should be as men and women.

**Material:** A whiteboard (or flipchart)

**56**

Draw two fields on the whiteboard, one to represent *female*, one to represent *male*.

Let the participants suggest words which they spontaneously consider female. There are no right or wrong answers; all the words that the participants come up with should be noted. Examples of female words that have come up in groups with participants from different part of the world are *soft, foolish, house keeper, loving, caring and breastfeeding*. If necessary, help the participants so that they remember to include words which describe biological characteristics.

Then ask for words which are usually considered male. Examples of such words that have come up in groups with participants from different part of the world are *breadwinner, aggressive, selfish, energetic, fighter and beard*.

When all the words have been noted, discuss: Can't a woman be selfish? Are there caring men? Have you ever met a foolish man? Do women ever provide for the family as the breadwinner? As you go, cross out the words which are not exclusively either female or male, until only the biological words such as *breasts* and *beard* remain.

The group can now clearly see the result: that what differentiates men from women is biology, i.e. that women can give birth and feed babies and that our bodies are different because of that.

**Questions to discuss after the exercise:**

- What did we learn?
- What new thoughts and ideas did we get?

**Exercise: THIS IS WHAT I KNOW**

**Objective:** This exercise makes all participants take part in the introduction to the discussion about gender equality. While they work, you will find out what they know and what they are interested in, as well as their questions.

**Material:** Paper, pencils, a whiteboard (or flipchart)

Draw the following chart on the whiteboard, ask the participants to copy it and fill it out. Participants may work

together in pairs. (You may also print charts in advance and hand them out.)

	<b>...about gender equality</b>
This is what I know...	
This is what I believe...	
This is what I'm curious about...	

When the chart is filled out all pairs are invited to share what they know, what they believe and what they are curious about.

You may use the outcome of the exercise in different ways depending on group size and purpose of the workshop/ seminar or speech, here are some suggestions:

- It could be used as to find new themes for discussion or workshop.

- You can use it as a way to check what knowledge gaps there might be in the group to make sure that you cover the right things in your presentation/ workshop.
- Design a set of workshops on different occasions on the different themes that people in the group say they are curious about.

**Exercise: BE AWARE OF THE LENSES YOU WEAR**

**Objective:** To highlight women in the Bible and to practice reading the Bible from different perspective.

**Material:** A Bible to each group, paper, pencils.

Divide into groups of two or three and give each group a Biblical woman to study. Give the groups 45 minutes to read, discuss and prepare a presentation.

The presentation should contain answers to the following questions:

- What did you learn about this specific person?
- What did the story tell us about God?
- Did you find principles to live by for us today?
- What did you learn about the lenses you wear when you read the Scripture?

thoughts, feelings and questions. Invite everyone to participate in an open group conversation. Make sure everyone is listened to.

**Examples of women in the Bible and where to find them:**

- Hagar: *Gen 16, Gen 21:9–21, Prov 30:21,23*
- Mary the mother of Jesus: *Matt 1*
- Mary Magdalene: *Matt 27*
- Martha: *Luk 10*
- Ruth and Naomi: *The book of Ruth*
- Deborah: *Judg 4*
- Esther: *The book of Esther*
- Jochebed, mother of Moses: *Ex 6*
- Miriam: *Ex 15*
- Rahab: *Josh 2*

**58**

When the groups have made their presentations, allow some time for everyone to write down their reflections,

**Questions to use in your reading:**

- Who is this woman? What is her background? Her history?
- In which context, culture and society does she live?
- What are her feelings?
- How does she see the world around her?
- Describe her relationships
- What happens to this woman and what choices does she make?
- What happens with her relationship to God during the timeline of this story?
- What is the main message of this story?
- What is there to learn about God? About us as humans? About us as believers?



**Exercise: WHY DOESN'T SHE LEAVE?**

**Objective:** To show that domestic violence is a complex and complicated issue, both the problems and solutions, as there are so many factors that are interwoven into the issue, and every case is unique.

**Material:** A ball of yarn, a pair of scissors

Make the group stand in a circle, and pick one person (it could be yourself) to stand in the middle.

Explain the background: that when we find out that a woman is being abused in her home, the most common first question people ask is “Why doesn’t she leave the relationship?”

Give a ball of yarn to one of the participants, and ask him or her to give one reason why the woman doesn’t leave. The person then holds on to the end of the yarn and throws the ball across the circle to someone else, who gives another reason, and throws the ball on to the next person. Continue until everyone has given a reason.

Now the person in the middle is trapped in yarn/reasons why she doesn’t leave.

Then take out a pair of scissors and ask people to think of what we need to do in order to support this woman to get

out of the situation. One person starts by naming one thing that can be done and then cutting one of the threads. This continues until all the yarn has been removed.

**Important:** End the exercise by explaining to the participants that even though we learned a lot from this exercise, we have actually asked the wrong question. When asking why she doesn’t leave, we blame the victim. What we should have asked is of course “Why is he using violence?” If you like you can do the exercise again, now asking the right question.

*Tip!* Try to do the same exercise but change the word *leave* to *preach* or *lead* and you might have another very interesting discussion.

**Exercise: MASTER SUPPRESSION TECHNIQUES**

**Objective:** Deepened understanding about Master Suppression Techniques, Counter Strategies and Validation Techniques.

**Material:** None

Before doing this exercise, the participants need to be familiar with the seven master suppression techniques and the principles for building a peaceful culture. (p. 30).

Make groups of three to five people, give them one master suppression technique and tell them to keep it secret to the other groups. Give the groups 20–30 minutes to prepare a short drama scene where they illustrate their master suppression technique and what could be done as a counter strategy.

Let each group show their scene to the rest of the participants. For each scene, let the audience identify the technique and the counter strategy used. Then let the audience identify and suggest a validation technique that could have been used instead of the master suppression technique. Let the group play the scene again, with these new instructions. (This should not require

any preparation for the group, let them improvise.)

Before moving on to the next group, discuss the scene. How did the “victim” feel in the first and in the second version? How did the “master suppressor” feel? Were there alternative ways to deal with the situation?

**Questions to discuss after the exercise:**

- What did we learn?
- Did we recognize any of the situations from our own experience?
- Do we see possibilities to identify suppression techniques and use counter strategies and validation techniques in our contexts?

**Exercise: IN MY OPINION...**

**Objective:** To start the discussion about gender and start reflecting about our cultural ideas about how women and men should be.

**Material:** None

Explain to the group that there is a thermometer on the floor reaching from one end of the room to the other. One end is hot and the other is cold. The hot end is for those who agree and the cold one for those who do not agree.

Read one of the statements below (or come up with your own statements) and let the participants place themselves on the scale of the thermometer, reflecting to which extent they agree with the statement.

After each statement, ask some of the participants why they chose to stand where they did, but remain neutral yourself. Ask others to give reasons for a different point of view. Break off the activity if it leads to a long discussion. Collect the main points for a conversation at the end rather than have a debate after each statement.

It is allowed to change opinions during the activity.

### Example statements

- A wife who is beaten should leave her husband after the first blow.
- I can influence my situation at work.
- I decide how I/we furnish my/our home.
- Men and women should share all household chores equally.
- Some jobs can only be done by persons of one sex.
- Women are better than men at looking after children.
- Financial decisions should be taken by the person who earns the money.
- I often give in if my partner and I have a row.
- If I could choose, I would stay at home and look after my children.
- Little boys are different from little girls.

### Exercise: GREEN OR RED

**Objective:** To be loved and included is one of our greatest needs as humans. This exercise points out the importance of belonging.

**Material:** Two large sheets of paper (one red and one green), pencils, post-it notes, a whiteboard (or flipchart)

To be loved and included is one of our greatest needs as humans. This exercise points out the importance of belonging.

Put up the red and green papers at the wall behind you. Tell the group to think about words to describe how they feel when they are being included. Ask them to write the words on post-it notes, one note for each word, and attach them to the green sheet on the wall. Then do the same thing again, but let the participants describe what it feels like when they are *not* being included, and attach those post-it notes to the red sheet.

Ask the group to gather around the green paper. Read all the words describing how we feel when we are being included. Introduce a conversation with the group through asking the following questions:

- What are the consequences for you as a person to be included?
- What are the consequences in your context?
- How does it affect the surroundings?
- What is the atmosphere like in a group where everyone is allowed to belong?

Invite everyone to accompany you to the red paper and read all words that describe how it feels to be excluded. Continue the conversation by asking the following questions:

- What are the consequences when you are excluded?
- What are the consequences in your context?
- How does it affect the surroundings?
- What is the atmosphere like in a group where some are excluded?

Leave the papers and let everyone get back to their seats. Discuss with the group how they wish to create an including culture. Encourage participants to be concrete about what actions they could take. You may for example ask them to

come up with three activities they will do the following month.

Continue the discussion by letting the participants discuss two and two for five minutes:

- What do you need to do more of?
- What do you need to do less of?

Share your conclusions with the whole group. Sum it all up on a whiteboard.

**Questions to discuss after the exercise:**

- What did we learn?
- If you would do one thing differently from now on, what would that be?

**Exercise: WATER STAIRCASE**

**Objective:** This is a good exercise to sum up a workshop and to practice listening to each other and create space for everyone in the group to talk and be part of the discussion.

**Material:** None

This exercise allows many to be involved in the conversations and it gives everyone the opportunity to listen.

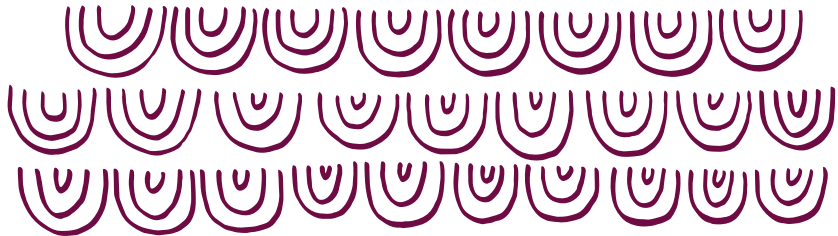
Divide the group into smaller groups of three to six people. Place all the participants in a circle or in front of a scene, in a way that makes it possible for everyone to hear each other.

Turn to the first group. Give them a question to talk about, like “How may we achieve gender equality within our organisation?” The other groups listen quietly. Let the first group continue their discussion for about 3 minutes, then interrupt them and ask them to leave the conversation where it was, without making any final conclusion.

Invite the next group in turn to continue the conversation where the previous group ended. The conversation is supposed to continue seamlessly in to the second group and they are not allowed to mention what has been said by the previous group. All other groups listen carefully and are not allowed to intervene.

Continue like this until all groups have had their chance to add to the conversation.

**Important:** As a facilitator you may need to intervene in a group’s conversation to encourage all the group members to participate.



**Exercise: AVOID, ACHIEVE, PRESERVE – A TOOL TO PREPARE FOR CHANGE**

**Objective:** If you are about to change how you do things in your organisation, this model may be a great tool to think the changes through.

**Material:** Paper, pencils, a whiteboard (or flipchart)

With every change you would like to implement, ask yourself the following question:

- What do we want to avoid with this change?
- What would we like to preserve?
- What do we want to achieve?

ISSUE	AVOID	PRESERVE	ACHIEVE
Ex/The old pulpit in church needs to be replaced with a new more modern.	A huge conflict with the family who's grandfather built the pulpit.	Good relationships. The value of our personal stories connected to the pulpit.	A pulpit that has a better height and has a microphone stand.
Ex/ Women as elders in church.	That people leave our church for other churches that are more conservative. Hurt or exclude the women that would be perfect for the function of elders.	The function and respect for the elders. All that we have done so far as to equality issues.	Equality in leadership that will make our church a church for everyone!

# Gender Analysis

**WHEN PLANNING A** project, one of the first steps is to do a gender analysis of the context where we want to work. In order to do this gender analysis as a part of the planning, the following areas and questions are useful tools. The more information we find in the different areas, the better we will be able to design a project that can actually change a situation and contribute to gender equality.

## Division of labour

- 1 a. What unpaid work tasks are done by women in the target area?
- 1 b. What unpaid work tasks are done by men in the target area?
- 1 c. What paid work tasks are done by women in the target area?
- 1 d. What paid work tasks are done by men in the target area?
- 1 e. What kind of community work is done by women?
- 1 f. What kind of community work is done by men?
- 1 g. How do the work loads differ between women and men?
- 1 h. Do girls perform unpaid work tasks? If so, what kind of work?
- 1 i. Do boys perform unpaid work tasks? If so, what kind of work?
- 1 j. Do girls perform paid work tasks? If so, what kind of work?
- 1 k. Do boys perform paid work tasks? If so, what kind of work?
- 1 l. Do girls take part in community work? If so, what kind of work?
- 1 m. Do boys take part in community work? If so, what kind of work?



**Decision making**

- 2 a. In which areas do women have the power to make decisions in the family?
- 2 b. In which areas do men have the power to make decisions in the family?
- 2 c. In which areas do women have the power to make decisions in the community?
- 2 d. In which areas do men have the power to make decisions in the community?

**Access to and control over resources**

- 3. What are the differences between women and men in terms of access to resources within the following areas?
  - 3 a. Economic (i.e. household income).
  - 3 b. Productive (i.e. land, equipment, tools, work, credit).
  - 3 c. Political (i.e. positions of leadership, information, organisation, vote in political elections, candidate in political elections).
  - 3 d. Health care and family planning.
  
- 4. What are the differences between women and men in terms of control over resources within the following areas?
  - 4 a. Economic (i.e. household income).
  - 4 b. Productive (i.e. land, equipment, tools, work, credit).
  - 4 c. Political (i.e. positions of leadership, information, organisation, vote in political elections candidate in political elections).
  - 4 d. Health care and family planning.
  
- 5. What are the differences between boys and girls in terms of access to resources within the following areas?
  - 5 a. Education.
  - 5 b. Health care.

**Legal and religious systems, norms and attitudes**

- 6 a. Are there legal systems that restrict equal opportunities and rights for women, men, boys and girls?
- 6 b. Are there religious systems that restrict equal opportunities and rights for women, men, boys and girls?
- 6 c. Are there social norms that restrict equal opportunities and rights for women, men, boys and girls?
- 6 d. Are there common attitudes towards women, men, boys or girls that restrict equal opportunities and rights for everyone?



**Vulnerability**

7. Are there specific vulnerabilities of women, men, girls or boys in the area? Such as exposure to violence, sexual or gender based harassment or violence, economic vulnerability and/or harmful traditions (e.g FGM, child marriage or rite of passage)?

**Root causes, agency and change**

- 8 a. What are the root causes to the inequalities you have identified above?  
 8 b. What possibilities for change do you see?  
 8 c. What agency do you see in the groups of women, men, boys and girls?  
 8 d. What practical needs do you need to target in your project in order to contribute to changing the situation?  
 8 e. What strategic needs do you need to target in your project in order to contribute to changing the situation?

**Risks**

- 9 a. One aspect of working with gender equality is to work with empowerment of women and girls. What are the risks if the status of women is improved in relation to the status of men?  
 9 b. How will you handle this risk and prevent conflict?

**Remember!**

Women, men, boys and girls are not homogenous groups. In a gender analysis it is therefore important to apply an intersectional perspective. Intersectionality help us to look into how different systems of discrimination (for ex. gender, ethnicity, religion, disability, sexual orientation or age) are linked and work together, for example there is a difference between being a young girl and an old woman or between a rich man and a poor man.





**At PMU we are convinced** that gender equality is the key to build sustainable Churches, organizations and societies. When we read the Bible we see a beautiful story of creation and salvation where God intended for women and men to live in equality. Hierarchies, discrimination and inequality is not from God, and as Christian Churches and faith based development actors one of our top priorities should be to promote gender equality so that we can reflect the image of God as it was meant to be. This book gives a theological perspective to gender equality work, provides concrete tools to take action on gender equality in organizations and Churches, as well as to provide examples by sharing experiences from our network of faith-based actors.

