

Women's Letter

The Women's Letter is a tool for sharing and strengthening the Mission 21 Women's Network



Articles, essays and reflections on

Women's Empowerment
in the context of gender-based violence

Written by women of Africa, Asia, Europe,
and Latin America

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Dr. Ruth Epting, church, mission and
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Editorial

Dear readers



As I entered the back door to the mission house, I heard a familiar tune: it was the elm tree dance song! In Chile, after the earthquake and tsunami of 2010, we often danced to the elm tree song. A friend told me that circles of women in Chernobyl used to dance to the same melody in a sym-

bolic gesture for healing the earth that had suffered so badly from the nuclear disaster of 1986. My heart was stirred to see the children dancing with their teachers in such full concentration. I remembered Aruna Gnanadson at a preparatory meeting for the 10th Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Busan, when she said that we must build societies where men are not taught a man has to be violent. Perhaps the day will come when violence no longer is the main focus of our conferences. The circle of dancing girls, boys and their teachers gives us hope!

Knowing that so many women live in situations dominated by gender-based violence, we want to share with you symbolic gestures, actions and words of women who weave networks of friendship, work and hope. *Today I live in peace with my neighbours*, says Maria Kapanda, describing her experience as a woman with HIV/Aids, a story narrated by Claudia Zeising, ecumenical worker in southern Tanzania. Lucy Kumala recounts the work of the Asian Women's Network and its efforts to involve churches in *Managing and Preventing Human Trafficking*. Spurred by our Asian colleagues' initiative, we are now developing a baseline for addressing the same problem in Latin America, hoping to find clues for a global approach to problems rooted in gender-based violence.

The Latin American and Caribbean Women's Popular Education Network (REPEN), invites us to understand the concept of empowerment as both objective and means. In seeking to build more just societies where people can fully develop their potentialities, it repre-

sents an objective. In fostering fair, inclusive and sustainable development, it also represents a means. Here we highlight the work of partner organisations in Bolivia, Chile and Peru, which aim to empower women through workshops that develop women's leadership capabilities in patriarchal settings. The need for the Advancement Fund for Women is made starkly clear in its support of each of these experiences of empowerment, from a conceptual as well as a pragmatic standpoint.

This exchange of experiences is enhanced by an article originally published by FIZ, the office on women immigrants and trafficking in Zurich, Switzerland, a veteran advocate for the dignity and rights of women. The article we present in this Women's Letter focuses on the existence of a "global supply chain", in which northern countries are sources of work for women lured from the south to informal jobs as domestics and sex work. Commonly, such jobs lack any kind of protection or governmental monitoring, and when these women are mothers with minor children, they are particularly vulnerable. The article includes an interview with Susana García, a FIZ-Makasi director, who describes the challenges of assisting mothers and their children.

In the section "Tools for Reflection and Transformation," we offer texts that expose negative power structures while also offering ways to change them. Although *Master Oppression Techniques* by Berit As was published more than twenty years ago, we regret to confirm that its analysis is still valid today. Furthermore, we share with you an excerpt of Korean Pastor Prof. Un-Sunn Lee's talk at the Busan conference. We invite you to read the complete article on our web page, consider how it relates to the experiences described in this issue and discuss in your groups the presence or absence of such mechanisms of oppression in your own lives. It would be a true pleasure to receive testimony from you on how the ways you go about neutralising those mechanisms!

In the framework of the Mission 21 Synod, Irmgard Frank, Commission on Women director, invited us to connect with *Mysticism and Work of the Heart to Revitalize the World*. At this meeting we shared success stories as well as the difficulties and challenges women networks encounter on every continent. We all made

a commitment to strengthen our communication with one another via Internet while maintaining traditional means of communication, such as postcards.

Thus we set in motion the We have mail! activity by printing archival photos to commemorate Basel Mission's 200 years which will be celebrated in June 2015. We invite each and every one of you to organise the dispatch of postcards on behalf of women who, along the long road to Mission 21, had the courage to testify, denounce injustice, defend rights and do theology. We celebrate the bonds, friendships, and sharing as some of the most effective tools to fight against any kind of oppression. That has been the teaching of the Basel Mission, the most important support association of Mission 21.

Josefina Hurtado Neira

Basel, December 2014

Women and Gender

In all its activities, Mission 21 advocates the establishment of gender equality justice. Together with women's networks, church and organisational partners, Mission 21 seeks the most appropriate paths for each local situation, aiming to abolish gender hierarchies and discrimination.

The Special Desk:

- offers financial support to strengthen and advance women and women's networks of church and organisational partners in Asia, Africa and Latin America,
- organises lectures and provides information on feminist theology from a southern perspective,
- and publishes the annual Women's Letter. This publication, published in English, German, French, Spanish and Indonesian, offers women from four continents a platform for exchanging experiences.

The Women and Gender Commission accompanies the Special Desk's work throughout Switzerland and Germany, supporting as a group of experts.

Members: Irmgard Frank (president), Marlies Flury, Rev. Esther Gisler Fischer, Rev. Claudia Hoffmann, Rev. Christine Höotmann, Rev. Kirsten Jäger, Rev. Maria-Ines Salazar, Esther Janine Zehntner.

“Today I live in peace with my neighbours”

Maria Kapanda interviewed by Claudia Zeising, Ecumenical worker, Mission 21

In numerous African societies women are still living in dependency. Their father and later their husband decide over their lives. Often women are victims of domestic violence.

Maria Kapanda lives in southern Tanzania, a rural area where most families are traditional subsistence farmers. Women are often oppressed and have a hard life. A family affected by a disease such as Aids is often subjected to social exclusion. For all these reasons we should admire Maria Kapanda's courage to speak so openly, allowing us a glimpse into her everyday life.

The Women's Department of the Moravian Church in Tanzania's southern province works closely with the Lusubilo Self-Help Group for people living with HIV/ Aids. Together they fight for more openness and against stigmatization. More stories like this can be read in the book *The Joy of Being Alive!*.



Maria Kapanda recounts:

I am the eldest child of the Ipyana Kapyela family. I am forty-two years old. I have given birth to five children, three of whom have died. I married in 1992 and today I am living in Syakula village.

I grew up in Ilolo near Rungwe, where I lived with my parents. I have six younger siblings, four sisters and two brothers who are all alive today. Three of my sisters and one brother are married and have children. Both my parents are still alive.

Between 1979 and 1985 I went to Rungwe Primary School and I finished Standard 7. I didn't get the opportunity to go to secondary school.

I got pregnant as a young girl. A young man tricked me and my father was very angry. He beat me and almost kicked me out of my home. I gave birth to a baby girl; however she faced many problems as she grew up. She had recurring

fevers, which led to her death while she was still small. After she died I met another man and became pregnant again. This time my father forced me to leave my home.

Eventually I got married and have been living with my husband for twenty years now. We have two children who still live with us: Enele, who was born in 1996 and Augustino Frank, who was born in 1998. Both children go to school. Enele is at Ukukwe secondary school and Augustino at Kitope primary school.

In 2007 my husband became ill. He had severe diarrhoea and a constant fever. People started to say, "this guy is infected", and I became very worried. I was afraid I would die. My husband went to get tested and was told he had Aids. I was then compelled to get tested. I was HIV+ but my CD4 was not very low. I started taking medication in 2009.

I believe that my husband was the one who infected me, which makes me sad. In the beginning I was very sick

and my health caused me a lot of problems. I used to have a small business selling food where lots of people would come and buy food, so I had a good income. After people found out that my husband was infected, they began to walk away from my business. When I also tested positive, my business stopped altogether.

I was ridiculed by people, including my own family. I became better educated about Aids and since then I have gained confidence and hope, and my health has improved. As more and more people around me found out they too were living with the virus, their attitudes changed. Today I live in peace with my neighbours.

We have a small tea farm and depend on this for our income. However, often this is not enough and I try to work at the Tea Estate when I get the chance. We have some cows that provide milk for the family, but not enough to sell. With the help of the Lusubilo Group we have been able to start a small pig project.

I try to educate my children about Aids. I tell them that it is not only spread through sex, but also through sharp objects like the razor their father uses.

I also take all the opportunities I can to talk about the presence of Aids to my community, and what they can do to avoid it. I warn them against drinking too much alcohol and having casual sex. I also try to encourage them to get tested.

They should not believe that they have been bewitched when they start to have recurring fevers.

FACTS

- In 26 of 31 countries with generalized epidemic in which nationally representative surveys were conducted recently, **less than 50%** of young women have comprehensive and correct knowledge about HIV. (<http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/hiv-and-aids/facts-and-figures> 21.07.2014)
- Women are already **two to four times more likely** than men to become infected with HIV during intercourse. Forced sex or rape increases this risk by limiting condom use and causing physical injuries. (<http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/facts-and-figures> 21.07.2014)



Human Trafficking in Asia

Lucy Kumala, Asian Women's Network

Workshop on Human Trafficking Handling and Prevention

16-18 September 2013, Bandung, West Java, Indonesia



The hard facts of human trafficking signal a breakdown in the notion of human beings created in the image of God, a rupture produced by fellow human beings who are both irresponsible and unscrupulous. Human trafficking is a global problem that requires a global response. It generates huge profits and affects millions of people around the world. Traffickers maintain control over their victims by isolating them and creating a climate of fear. Organized crime is an important factor in its growth. Many Asian countries must deal with the issue of human trafficking either as countries of destination or sources.

Human trafficking is a multi-faceted problem but most cases share similar causes such as poverty, a lack of job opportunities, materialism, limited education and domestic violence against women. Traffickers lure people with the promise of jobs or education. Subsequently, they force the victims to become commercial sex workers or plunge them into the world of pornography. Victims of human trafficking frequently encounter terrible situations that may include violence - both physical, including reproductive injuries, and psychological - caused by isolation and domination, as well as diseases such as HIV/Aids. Victims are trapped in a terrible situation from which escape is difficult, due to the strong dominance of the traffickers. Trafficking is a violation of human rights, specifically, the right to life and freedom from all forms of slavery.

The Asian Women Fellowship of Mission 21

Partner Churches in Asia feels called upon to restore the image of God. To accomplish this goal, first, we are coming together to understand the problem of human trafficking, its modus operandi and its causes. Second, we are providing resources to identify cases, help victims, and learn how to prevent human trafficking in each church. Third, the Asian Women Fellowship has built commitments and an international network to prevent and handle human trafficking in each province and each country.

Taiwan¹

Women and children are the populations most vulnerable to human trafficking. Women, in particular, fall easy prey to the international sex market. In a desperate attempt to survive, indigenous parents of low-income families, sell their daughters, sometimes at very young ages, to human traffickers. Often those indigenous girls - many under 16 years old and as young as 8 years old in one case - are sold into the sex trade. Many educated people have become aware of the problem of child prostitution, and strive to rescue girls from prostitution. The first organization to bring public visibility to this issue is the Presbyterian Church of Taiwan-PCT.

In recent years, organized crime groups have employed different means to smuggle foreign people into Taiwan illegally. Generally, these immigrants are

women who are smuggled for prostitution, and male workers for labour exploitation. Several NGOs – including the Taipei Women’s Rescue Foundation, the Garden of Hope Foundation, and the Anti-Trafficking Alliance - have been established to help victims of human trafficking. The Garden of Hope Foundation launched a social movement on behalf of young girls and played a key role in obtaining passage of the Children and Youth Sexual Transaction Prevention Act by the Legislative Yuan. A landmark for human trafficking deterrence in Taiwan, the law will protect children

and adolescents under the age of eighteen from sexual exploitation.

Malaysia²

Malaysia is a destination, and to a lesser extent, a source and transit country for women and children subjected to human trafficking, specifically in regards to forced prostitution of men, women, and children. The majority of trafficking victims are foreign work-

Human Trafficking in Latin America: Challenges for its Prevention

Inés Pérez, Con-spirando Collective, Chile

On September 8, the Con-spirando Collective in conjunction with Mission 21 coordinated a workshop at Diego de Medellín Ecumenical Center, in Santiago, Chile to encourage churches to address the growing problem of human trafficking in Latin America.

At the workshop’s opening session, Josefina Hurtado of Mission 21 pointed to the Asian Women’s Network as a model for awareness-building initiatives among churches on addressing and preventing human trafficking. The example of the Asian Women’s Network, Hurtado affirmed, “encouraged us to create a baseline on this problem in Latin America. We want to generate raise greater awareness in churches regarding the global socio-economic nature of this serious situation. We also want to strengthen ties among women’s networks to seek common strategies, and, perhaps most important, realize that we are not alone or isolated in the struggle to end gender-based violence.”

Cecilia Castillo Nanjarí, consultant specializing in women and gender justice issues, spoke on “A diagnostic reflection on human trafficking in Mission 21 partner organisations of Latin America,” with a special focus on the Protestant world. Castillo emphasized the difference between trafficking and smuggling in persons, providing information culled from a survey of Protestant churches and ecumenical organisations of Latin America and the Caribbean. Castillo highlighted the intense work undertaken by ecumenical agencies on the Latin American continent, such as the Refugee and Immigrant Support Committee (CAREF) of Argentina, working on the difficult issue of human trafficking. Within various Protestant churches, Latin American women have also shown interest in the issue, actively engaging in awareness-raising and training actions on human trafficking.

During a round table discussion he coordinated on “Human Trafficking and the Mission of the Church,” Dr. David Muñoz Condell, Protestant chaplain and religious expert for Chile’s Criminal Investigative Police, explained the characteristics of new crimes such as human trafficking. “Believe it or not, we have discovered that both the Catholic and Evangelical churches are involved in human trafficking, ” a crime which absolutely counter to church discourse, asserted Muñoz. He added that this crime is being categorized in relation with the Christian missions.

Rev. Marcelo Huenulef Ortega, pastor of Trinity Congregation and coordinator of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Chile’s (IELCH) new Immigrant Pastoral Service, described the organization’s mission and vision. Huenulef shared the round table with Ruth Yusti, who described her experience as an immigrant to Chile.

During the second half of the workshop, participants worked in small groups, discussing their impressions of the issue. Workshop conclusions will be included in the final report on human trafficking in Latin America.

ers who migrate willingly to Malaysia from Indonesia, Nepal, India, Thailand, China, Philippines, Burma, Cambodia, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Vietnam seeking greater economic opportunities. Subsequently, some fall into forced labour or debt bondage at the hands of their employers, employment agents, or informal labour recruiters. The Women's Ministry produced pamphlets in nine languages, which the Immigration Department is distributing to alert potential trafficking victims.

Korea³

Korea has become a human trafficking destination country. However, some Korean women are taken by the sex industry to Japan or the United States. Recognizing the need for Asian solidarity to liberate Asian women suffering from human trafficking and forced labour, Durebang (My Sister's Place), the mission program of the National Church Women's Association of the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea (PROK) has been working diligently to unite with Asian partner churches and women's organizations. In 2008 it launched a Durebang office in Manila, followed in March 2013 by Pasundan - Durebang, an Indonesian branch, with the Pasundan Church of Indonesia. We take this opportunity to make a public commitment to work with you to address and prevent human trafficking in collaboration with Asian partner churches and organizations, as well as Mission 21.

1 Represented by Lin Hsiu-Chuan and Wen Ho-Ling of the Presbyterian Church-PCT of Taiwan.

2 Represented by Rev. Myrine Unan and Pastor Sampoi Malaysia from Basel Christian Church in Malaysia-BCCM-BM.

3 Represented by Rev. Chang Bin, Director of the Presbyterian Church's Durebang Academy in the Republic of Korea.

FACTS

- Trafficking ensnares millions of women and girls in modern-day slavery. Women and girls represent 55 per cent of the estimated 20.9 million victims of forced labour worldwide, and 98 per cent of the estimated 4.5 million forced into sexual exploitation. (<http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/21.07.2014>)

Power And Empowerment

REPEM – Network for Popular Education between Women, www.repem.org.uy

THE MEANING OF EMPOWERMENT

This expression originated from English to become a fundamental concept associated with a gender perspective and the struggle of women's movements throughout the world. The term was first used during the civil rights movements of the sixties in the United States and was adopted by feminists in the eighties. Feminists from the South¹ began using the term extensively, resulting in its integration in many other spheres, including development cooperation. Based on an analysis of structural disparity suffered by women, empowerment demands that women take power to participate in development processes and to contribute to the design of these processes.

In this context the word "power" refers not to domination over others but rather the power to be, share, influence and be a full member of society. The concept implies the ability to do and to effect change. Therefore, empowerment stands for processes that endow the individual with resources – material as well as symbolic – and strengthen internal sources of power on various levels.

According to Gita Sen, "empowerment has to do first of all with power, that is the power to change relationships in favour of those who, before, did not have much authority over their own life." Batliwala² reaffirms this notion in regards to the importance of empowerment as control over resources (physical, human, intellectual, financial, and those of one's own being) as well as control over ideology (beliefs, values and attitudes). If power means control, then empowerment refers to the process of gaining control.

Acknowledging the mistrust and the discomfort of some feminists who raise ethical questions regarding the very idea of exercising power over others, Sen places it in a framework that refers to "the ability to be, to express oneself. In the latter sense, the concept of power approaches the notion of human abilities³."

Empowerment is a key concept in a holistic political proposal. For this reason, it can be regarded more as a strategy⁴, in other words, a given set of actions and processes envisioned to achieve greater decision-making power; to foster a feeling of security and a vision of the future; the capability to earn a living; the capability to be an effective actor in the public sphere, and to achieve mobility and greater visibility in society.

To empower, then, requires deconstruction of

internalised subordinations. Empowerment implies developing critical thinking and the capacity to question, as well as self-recognition and recognizing in others the characteristics that have conditioned us to gradually accept the limitations and mandates, which have become naturalized over time. Empowerment leads to greater participation that can disrupt the public scenario, as a process that challenges the existing power structure while also achieving greater control.

The empowerment strategy centres on rights, the “right to have rights.” This approach concerns not only obtaining rights but also the capacity to actively exercise rights and, above all, to influence decisions that affect those rights. It embraces a vast array of actions that range from individual self-affirmation to collective resistance, protest and demonstrations that question and challenge the existing power relations, with seeking transformation of the nature and direction of relations that marginalize women and others. In the framework of feminist theory, the concept signals an asymmetry of power in gender relations in everyday life. It understands that in daily life experience, women are in a situation of “disempowerment.” Therefore, it can be said that empowerment has been achieved “when it crosses a home’s doorstep.” Empowerment is a means as well as a goal. It is goal because in it lies the idea of building more just societies in which people can fully develop their potentials; it is also a means in that, through empowerment, fair, inclusive and sustainable development is fostered.

Source: Women and power: learning from political practices of women. Chap. 3, pages 2-4, REPEM PRODUCCIONES, Montevideo, 2006

Empowerment Workshops in Latin America

Forum Debate: The “ideal” family?

Veronica Mamani Choque, Unatatawi Foundation, Bolivia

Women’s participation in decision-making spheres is non-existent in the municipality of Sorata, Bolivia. Normally men occupy public places and earn a salary, while women take care of the household and family, and receive no pay.

This system of domination, which we call patriarchy, can be de-patriarchized! How? By formulating public policies that bring about change in all places that cause submission of women.

Forty women and leaders of various grassroots organisations and communities of the municipality of Sorata in Larecaja Province, participated in a panel discussion on “The ideal family“, organised by the Uñatatawi Foundation. Issues included elimination of patriarchy, concepts of masculinity, and women’s rights. Women leaders of Sorata have created greater awareness of women’s rights and generated awareness on the unequal roles of men and women in families as well as in decision-making processes of their grassroots organisations and municipal government. Radio programs have made possible broad dissemination of these concepts.

- 1 DAWN Development Alternatives with Women for New Era is a feminist network from the South that was created in 1984 shortly before the Nairobi world conference on women where the organization presented a document entitled “Perspectives of Third World Women.” Today the network is present in Africa, Asia and Latin America. It has research centres and has become an important network for defending the interests of woman in the South. They are present regionally as well as internationally, with a notable activism within the UN especially through participation at international women’s conferences.
- 2 Srilatha Batliwala, “The meaning of women’s empowerment: new concepts from action,” in Poder y Empoderamiento de las Mujeres, TM editores, Bogota, 1997.
- 3 Sen, Gita. “Empowerment as an Approach to Poverty“, in National Development and Local Environmental Action: the case of the River Narmada. In: Bhaskar, V. and Glyn, A. (ed.), The North, the South and the Environment Ecological Constraints and the Global Economy. Eartscan: United Nation University Press. 1995
- 4 Schuler Margaret “Women’s Rights as Human Rights: the international empowerment agenda,” in Poder y Empoderamiento de las mujeres, TM editores, Bogota, 1997.

A gender-equity focus on women's participation in rural development

Aurora Luna, Alfalit, Peru

The limited access to education, work, health, justice and political participation, as well as various forms of violence hinder the development of women in conditions of equality. With the aim to address such problems, the Alfalit Peru organization held a workshop for women from the districts of Chupa and Arapa, in the province of Azagnaro, Puno Region. The topics addressed were: rural leadership, soil treatment and productive organisation. Specialists and technicians attended, aiming to foster participation of women. All workshop proceedings were translated into Quechua. To further facilitate participants' comprehension, organizers pointed to examples from daily experience and places where men and women participate that need greater involvement by women.

The participants appreciated learning basic elements of good communication through interactive dynamics, sharing experiences in the preparation and use of biological fertilisers and insecticides in organic farming; sharing experiences on choosing and preserving seeds as well as care and upkeep and the most adequate tools.

Participants became acquainted with Cuzco's "water harvest" experience and its construction and maintenance of large natural reservoirs. Puno, a region with a very long dry season, is a prime location for replicating these experiences during the region's rainy season. The workshop also addressed the ecological cultivation of quinoa as a value-added commodity on great demand internationally. Because quinoa cultivation is still rather limited, farmers must not miss the opportunity to market the crop. However, expansion of quinoa cultivation and marketing requires greater preparation and technical guidance.

Difficulties encountered including the following: slow municipal government response for coordination; limited experience of women in workshop participation; the time required for translation into Quechua; the distance from communities; and the lack of transportation for participants.

Production and Cultural Experiences Presentation

We exhibited and sold nutritious foods such as bread enriched with quinoa. A dance competition was held, and traditional dishes and healthy food were offered. One woman stood out for having sold great

quantities of quinoa bread. Awards were presented to women of the first, second and third stands who prepared natural fertilisers and bio-insecticides. The workshop enthused women who promised to share their newly acquired knowledge with their families and other members of their communities.



Feminist Theology and Leadership Courses

Carla Cerpa, Con-spirando Collective, Chile

Some 48 women from three different municipalities of Santiago attended the Courses on Feminist Theology and Leadership organised by the Con-spirando Collective. Issues included leadership and self-care, gender and theology, and computer literacy. Participants highly valued the learning process and the school's two levels – one theoretical and the other practical, which taught concrete tools for facilitating women's leadership.

The course underscored subjective experience and corporality as primary point of departure, and self-care was also considered key.

Conducting the course in two different environments - Evangelical Pentecostal and lay community organisations – enabled us to acknowledge different needs in context and offer interpretations accordingly.

We discovered that women in leadership positions and community organisation leaders are integrated in the government system in a kind of mutual dependence. On the one hand, women receive resources from local government for activities, while the local governments need to form alliances with community organisations in order to attain their goals and implement their programmes. Frequently such courses reproduce systems of dependence and assistance and fail to develop critical thinking and the capacity for reflection. Consequently, they fail to address concerns such as human rights, women's movement, information and hard facts. In addition there is a lack of analysis of context and political reflection about national reality.

This assessment generated ideas regarding what topics should be addressed in future training workshops.

In addition, we observe how hegemonic gender models are reproduced, as women are overstrained by having to balance their multiple roles as wife, mother, housewife and leader. Our course strives to recognise how roles and gender stereotypes develop in daily life.

Migrant Mothers¹

The following contribution was initially published in the newsletter of FIZ-Fachstelle Frauenhandel und Frauenmigration (office in Zürich, Switzerland that addresses the issue of women as victims of trafficking and immigrants), which fights against violence and exploitation of women, as an advocate for women's dignity and rights. FIZ has two help desks: one that assists migrant women and a Makasi intervention office for women victims of trafficking. In addition, the help desks conduct educational and political work. This article describes a global supply chain, in which northern countries lure women from southern nations to informal service as domestic and sexual workers. Such employment is generally unprotected and uncontrolled, a situation of vulnerability that is compounded when these women are mothers with young children. Following the article about migrant mothers is an interview with FIZ-Makasi counsellor Susana Garcia, who speaks about the challenges of assisting women and children.
(Claudia Hoffmann)

Almost half of migrants in Switzerland are women. Whether they have children and how many cannot be verified statistically nor whether they entered with their children or had to leave them in their country of origin. During the last three years two-thirds of those women attended by FIZ Makasi (344 of a total of 588) were mothers or pregnant women.

Gender-specific discrimination in the country of origin – such as limited chances for work and education, sexual violence or exploitation, rigid gender roles – can be the reasons for women to migrate. Yet immigration does not always enable them to escape discrimination. Swiss migration law for example only admits women as wives, tourists, as cabaret dancers or highly qualified persons. In reality those last mentioned can hardly be found – most women from third states are wives, sex workers or are here illegally. Women from EU-states can work here, however in general they only find employment in occupations typically regarded as feminine: in the elder or child care sector.

¹ This contribution as well as the following interview is taken from the FIZ circular letter Nr. 53, November 2013, with the kind consent of the specialist department for trafficking of women and migration of women. See http://www.fizinfo.ch/images/content/5553_FIZ_Rundbrief_web.pdf?csrf=NzEwMzYyNjc4MzQ3MQ_.

The global supply chain

Often women migrate because they have children and family but no livelihood, if there is no partner or he is without work and does not feel responsible for the family. Migrants then have to leave their children with relatives in order to be able to look after the children of gainfully employed women here. Or they place their parents in a home in their country of origin to be able to care for old people here. This global supply chain is an international system which is layered ethnically or according to classes: Women from countries of the South or East resume caring duties of gainfully employed women of the North and West. One thing remains constant: domestic and care works are the domain of women.

Acting subjects not victim

Women migrate to widen their horizon, to study or as highly qualified employees too. There are many positive migration experiences. Yet these cannot **hide** the different reality for the majority of women. Even though migrant women are not simply victims but acting individuals, who take courageous decisions in the given circumstances. Yet they are vulnerable – especially if they have children –, and if this vulnerability is exploited, they may become victims.

Mothers being victims of women trafficking

The constellations of mothers, who become victims of women trafficking, are manifold and complex. Some have children in their country of origin, and the anguish for them may make them remain in a situation of exploitation. For the threat of their children is applied by the culprits as a pressurising medium. Other women have become pregnant during exploitation or on their escape. In the best case by a new partner, in the worst case by the culprit.

Mothers in Makasi counseling

When mothers are victims of women trafficking they are faced with financial, psychological, medical and legal questions and problems on the protection of victims. FIZ Makasi counselor Susana Garcia informs about specific challenges in counselling women and their children.

Almost two thirds of the women, whom FIZ Makasi counselled during the last few years, were pregnant or had babies. What are their specific needs?

Susana Garcia: All victims of trafficking in women,



who contact us, are highly traumatised and in need of careful and selective care. Whenever a woman is pregnant or has a baby we do not have to care for one person but for two. The main thing is to act quickly. Mother as well as baby need adequate care and a safe environment, but it is much more difficult and tedious to find a good shelter for a woman and her baby than for a woman alone. The reception procedure for mother and child establishments takes more time, there are more places involved.

Are pregnancy and motherhood a problem for women?

The pregnant woman lacks a social network which she would in the best case have in her country of origin. She is in a strange land, without knowledge of the language and in a new environment. Many of these young mothers did not have their own mother who cared for them; they are lacking a role model. Many grew up in homes or experienced a dysfunctional family. Maybe they were neglected or have experienced exploitation and little love or bonding affiliation during their childhood. To this we must add their traumatic experience as victims of trafficking in women. The psychological and physical effects of post traumatic stress disturbance will no doubt influence the relationship with the child as well as the wellbeing of the child. This means: It is immensely important that the mother, as soon as the baby arrives, can be assisted. The advisor takes care of the child to give the mother a break.

What does such assistance involve?

It is necessary to prepare for a big setting before the child has arrived. Naturally each case has to be considered separately. Occasionally we call an advisor if the mother is physically enormously. The advisor cares for the child so that the mother is relieved. Thus she profits from various offers: for instance accommodation in a mother and child establishment, child care and later family attendance. Such offers and services can be organised quickly by the advisors.

What sort of difficulties and problems do you encounter in counselling pregnant women and mothers?

There are legal, psychological, medical and financial problems. For instance I once took care of a pregnant woman. While the canton, in which the lady had been exploited, supported the lady according to the law for assistance to victims, which covered the therapeutic, legal and social care (social care by Makasi), the child, born a few months later, did not receive whether material nor financial support.

How can such situations be prevented?

Cooperation of all offices involved is essential. Social services, departments for the protection of children and adult, KESB, police, dep. of migration, offices for assistance to victims must cooperate even across cantonal boundaries. If the domicile of the pregnant woman is not clear, because it is difficult to find an establishment that can offer the needed care, the subscription with health care is delayed. And if, after the birth of the child, the mother still does not have a residence permit or, in the case of need, has not yet been given an advisor, then it becomes more difficult and tedious to organise measures of support. The residence permit opens up many doors for mother and child. As long as it has not been granted yet, all is delayed and leads to great instability. Yet the most important thing is that traumatised women find rest and stability, so that, after enduring exploitation and violence, she is able to acquire new confidence and capacity to take the reins of her life into her own hands. All agencies in the process must understand this.

Tools for Reflexion and Transformation

Master Suppression Techniques

Berit Ås

Mary John Mananzan, Executive Director of the Institute of Women's Studies of the Philippines, explains in the Publisher's Note of the book that presents Berit Ås's Master Suppression Techniques, that these "are methods men use consciously or unconsciously to make women passive, submissive and repressed. When women become conscious of these techniques, they are rendered harmless- their power dissolves as soon as women become aware of them."¹

Berit Ås, Norwegian politician and social psychologist, developed the theory of the master suppression techniques more than 20 years ago. Similar techniques are used to subjugate all oppressed groups. However, Berit Ås believes that they are used in specific combinations and situations that affect women, due to the patriarchal society's definition of women as objects or property. The five master suppression techniques that Berit Ås identifies are the following:

- Making Invisible
- Ridiculing
- Withholding Information
- Damned If You Do And Damned If You Don't
- Heaping Blame and Putting to Shame

Today we find an extensive development of these techniques, for example, when the dominant group feels it has the right to define reality and to discard certain concerns as irrelevant, or which decisions are considered irrational. They are also present in stereotyping that locks us into predetermined positions or roles. At the structural level, these techniques can be noted in claims that women are better suited for jobs that involve administration or caring for people. Also at a structural level, they are present in sexual harassment, in the sense that denigration and abuse of women is a widespread practice in advertising, as is sexual exploitation in the communications media.

At the individual level, it may involve improper and unwelcome sexual harassment, either verbal or physical or both; as well as benevolent resistance such as resistance to demands for equal opportunity in an age of publicly sanctioned gender equality policies. The idea of equality is widely approved in theory, but no action is taken to put it in practice. 'Invisible' opposition obstructs change, with plenty of words but no concrete action.

At the Women and Men's Pre-Assembly of the World Council of Churches 10th Assembly in Busan, woman

from different continents were asked to share their testimony as to which suppression techniques were present in their lives and the strategies they use to work through and overcome them. Here we share stirring remarks offered by professor Un-sunn Lee of South Korea:

"First of all, the suppression technique of 'making invisible' I experienced mostly as wife of a pastor in activities in my husband's church. Because he is also a theological seminary professor, his life as pastor is different from other pastors. Yet, he readily makes me invisible at church as pastor. I protested a lot and came to realize how difficult it is to behave differently in the real Korean church life, even though he is very well aware of feminist thinking and theology of liberation. As for me, in spite of humiliating experiences, I do not have in mind to be ordained, because I know well the fundamental suppressing character of the traditional clerical ordination system of the church."

"For me, what is more to information is the unfairness in that they take my knowledge or information without any acknowledgement or disclosure of the original source. It is their long habit to regard as their own what originally does not belong to them, but rather to women or their wives. Nevertheless, confronting this sense of unfairness, I also remember the teaching of the Bible that we must not mention the good things we have done. With all this inner turmoil, I become tired and shameful. It is what Berit Ås calls "heaping blame and putting to shame."

Prof. Dr. Un-sunn Lee is professor of Asian studies and philosophy of education, Sejong University, Seoul. Her major works are feminist transversal studies in Confucianism and Christianity. Former-representative Chair of Theology Committee of KAWT, President of Korean Christian Faculty Association.



¹ <http://eng.kilden.forskningsradet.no/c53296/artikkel/vis.html?tid=53283>

Mysticism and the work of the heart to revitalize the world

Maria José Arana

Mysticism is a feminine word in Spanish as well as in German. It refers to what is inward, emotions, the anima. Mysticism is dynamic; it describes a way of love. Mysticism is also dialectical and means progress and rest, ecstasy and concentration, darkness and bright light, all at the same time.

Mystical spirituality is not unworldly but a certain way of looking at the world: to feel and to bring the power of love to act in it. Such a world-mysticism has its social component, it is a force, which links to and aspires upwardly.

The heart is the place where this mystical secret is guarded. Prov. 4:23: "Above all else, guard your heart. It is where your life comes from." (NIRV)

The heart's work is about concern for the suffering of this world and working to vanquish that suffering, committing oneself to justice, working towards a change of human relationships in order to improve our world. Mysticism and the transformation of the world are interrelated, merging into one another.

"Think about how you are" was the (former) common German translation of **Haggai 1,5**¹. The Spanish and the original Hebrew Bible reads: "Work with your heart on your ways" to your life. This involves a re-orientation of our relations. We are all interconnected and need to be aware of this. (1 Cor. 12) This kind of spirituality is developed by the anima, the feminine, in all its breadth and in both sexes. Improved relations bring joy and are a healing power that flows out from the heart of God.

This human responsibility engenders the ecumenical dimension of mysticism. The object of the heart's work is to coax it outward.

At the World Council of Churches General Assemblies, it was found that many women are involved in this type of work. The result is an interdenominational feminist theology with a vision that goes far beyond each woman's own religion, culture and respective continent. Thus we know God in all nations. But feminist theology as a liberation theology concerns not only women all over the world; it also affects men.

We must find common ways to live out our faith in today's world. This requires a mystical dimension, a work of the heart that is guided by wisdom and love. Today, new perspectives are opening.

This text was read by Irmgard Frank, President of the Women's Commission of Mission 21, at the Women's Meeting, June 10, 2014 to which the Women and Gender Board and the Women's Commission invited all women delegates.

The source of this text is the article by Maria José Arana, RSCJ, "La Mística y el Trabajo del Corazón para Revitalizar el Mundo" in the book, "Netze der Versöhnung knüpfen", zum 80. Geburtstag von Ruth Epting, hrsg. von Elisabeth C. Miescher und Maria José Arana, RSCJ, Basileia Verlag 1999, Basel, Switzerland. Translated from Spanish to German and abbreviated by Roswitha Ebner-Golder.

¹ "Think carefully about how you are living" (NIRV), "Think about what is happening" (Easy to Read Version), "Consider your ways" (King James), or "Give careful thought to your ways." (NIV)

Info-Platform

Strengthening women's networks

Basel, June 10th 2014. The Mission 21 Synod brought together delegates and guests from Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Europe. During introductions, each participant described where she came from, her work and links to international networks, while placing a pin on an atlas and uniting it with a thread to other pins. Representatives from each continent then reported on their work with women and existing networks. The idea and concept for a Blog on women and gender network projects arose during the conference.

As the gathering drew to a close, delegates were given postcard photographs from Basilea Mission archives, highlighting the 200th year anniversary coming up in 2015. Participants were encouraged to send their own postcards to commemorate women who have been important in their mission history.

Women's Conference in Kwango Evangelical Community

Kwango Evangelical Community, Kasongo Lunda, October 2014.

The Kwango Evangelical Church Federation of Women convened fifty women from every region of the Congo with full right to voice their opinions and vote. Guests included Africa Women's Network coordinator Suzan Mark, of Nigeria; Tina Paul Banu, also from Nigeria; Vreni Blum and Josefina Hurtado, both from Switzerland.

The aspiration for unity between church members from the country's northern and southern regions was this forum's central focus. In her travel report (Oct. 18, 2014), Vreni Blum describes the experience: "During the first songs, the women began dancing and hugging each other and they decided to include us. It was so moving to observe, unlike the Synod held in February when people remained in two distinct blocks. This time, the talks shared a common thread: "That they all may be one" (John: 17:21).

A second important theme was the concept of autonomy, from the perspective of freedom in terms of decision-making but also economic independence, exemplified



Foto: Vreni Blum

Clémence Inenga and Sophie Mayengo.

by the honoraria paid conference participants. “Representatives insisted that the conference should be exemplary even in this aspect,” affirmed Blum.

A third issue of concern to delegates was competency-based leadership. Sophie Mayengo, then Federation president, in her speech to the assembly underscored, “The struggle is vast. Our society needs women, but competent women who have the ability to defend women’s identity more effectively.” Federation president-elect Clémence Inenga, added, “No one can ignore that women comprise the majority of church members and represent more than half the population of the Democratic Republic of Congo. These women must acquire a vision for their future, a vision of a better life. It’s time that Protestant women look ahead and take advantage of opportunities that are unfolding on the horizon.”

Suzan Mark, the Africa Women’s Network coordinator, noted, “What impressed me most was the way the Kasongo-Lunda church president supported the women’s work, as well as the fact that the provincial vice administrator position is held by a woman.”

Women and Gender Blog

We hope you will find inspiring articles at <http://www.m21-womengender.org/>. This depends on you! Send us your ideas, news of events, questions and prayers to share in this Blog.

8 June 2015: International Conference Basel Mission at 200

“Women make history –
and they have histories of their own to tell.”

This will be a significant year, not just for the Basilea Mission and Mission 21 but also for international commitments to gender justice. Twenty years have transpired since the Beijing Women’s Conference. We want to take stock and reflect together with you where we are at this juncture, each one from her own context but also united as sisters in Christ.

In addition to studying issues related to situations of gender-based violence and changes to inequitable power structures, we would like to analyse and plan the path to follow in the future.

An international women’s network is the cornerstone for constructing relations founded on solidarity and mutual respect. After the Conference, we will invite everyone to celebrate bonds of friendship in a festivity for all.

Order Form

I am interested in receiving the Women’s Letter.

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