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# Women's Letter

Written by women in Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America.



**ALL**  
are included

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## Cover

Pastor Wuhua Paqaliyus and Suzan Mark at the Advocacy Workshop 2018 in Basel (Foto Renate Bühler)



## Table of Contents

### Editorial

Josefina Hurtado Neira.....3

### «I'm a woman, I'm indigenous, and I have a disability»

Olga Montufar Contreras..... 4

### Remembering Tapi Omas Ihromi- Simatupang

Marie-Claire Barth-Frommel .....5

### Towards Diversity, Subjectivity, and Communion in Asia

Hsiu Chuan Lin ..... 6

### A therapeutic re-reading of the Bible

Nidia Fonseca Rivera .....7

### Religious fundamentalism in the central region of Peru

Ebed Grijalva Yauri .....8

### Empowering Women for a Better Africa/World

Suzan Mark ..... 9

### Women in Mission Being Moved by the Spirit

Josefina Hurtado Neira..... 10

### Women's Migration, Escape, and Persecution

Miriam Glass .....11

Message from the Women's Conference of Mission 21 ..... 12

Tools for Reflection and Transformation

### The Principles of Permaculture

Susan Cabezas Cartes..... 13-14

Info-Platform

Advocacy and Women's Human Rights.....15

### Meeting of the Mission 21 partners in Latin America

### Star Mountain delegation to the Ministry of Women, Palestine

Order form..... 16

«I walk with...» Obertina Johanis (Photo Christoph Rácz)



# Editorial

## Dear Readers



The search for ways to eradicate all types of discrimination is a substantial part of Mission 21's work, yet the current context is hostile to our intentions.

The message delivered by delegates from women's networks to the 2018 Synod of Mission 21

stressed that the alliance of economic and political fundamentalism, together with religious fundamentalisms, is being used to paralyze gender equality and recommended paying attention to the theological education of our leaders, both men and women, as well as the invention of strategies based on an intercultural dialogue and the strengthening of actions of solidarity as an international network.

As a sign of solidarity with women who are committed to working for justice and peace, the international network of Mission 21 promotes the action «I walk with...». After walking with Suzan Mark from Nigeria, in solidarity with her work with survivors of the Boko Haram attacks in northern Nigeria, Obertina Johanis of the Pasundan Christian Church in Bandung, Indonesia, continues on this walk of solidarity, emphasizing the effort to raise awareness about the discrimination and violence endured by women migrant workers. During the next Women's Conference prior to the Synod in June 2019, Ebed Grijalva will continue this action, warning about the gender-based murder of women –femicide– and the advance of various types of fundamentalism.

From women's networks of around the world, we share testimonies and experiences that challenge us. From Latin America, Ebed Grijalva reflects on religious fundamentalisms in the central region of Peru, and Nidia Fonseca from Costa Rica offers a proposal for a therapeutic rereading of the Bible. Hsiu Chuan Lin, from Taiwan, sends us a summary of the book "Mission 21 in Asia: Towards Diversity, Subjectivity, and Communion," sponsored by the Fund for the Advancement of Women. In turn, Suzan Mark, who coordinates the work with women's networks in Africa, shares reflections stemming from her participation in the first women's conference of the Moravian Church in Africa.

Marie-Claire Barth-Frommel offers her testimony of friendship and professional growth with the late Tapi Omas Ihromi-Simatupang. We remember and honor those who have preceded us in the work for gender justice. The advocacy workshops held in Basel and Geneva mark a

milestone on our annual agenda. Participants from Africa, Asia, and Latin America shared best practices working for gender justice in their contexts and discussed their involvement in the use of United Nations human rights mechanisms. The central theme of this year's workshop in Basel was Sustainability and Political Advocacy. We learned about the principles of permaculture and the possibility of connecting them to the Sustainable Development Goals, which are central to Mission 21's efforts.

And during the presentation of Mexico's periodic report to the Committee for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women at the United Nations, we were blessed with an opportunity to meet and share with Olga Montufar and Mario Licona, members of the civil society delegation. I invite you to begin reading this Women's Letter with their testimony, which call us to work for the inclusion of everyone.

Josefina Hurtado

# «I'm a Woman, I'm Indigenous, and I've a Disability»

By Olga Montufar Contreras



Olga Montufar Contreras engaging for «I walk with...» in Basel. (Photo Mission 21)

My name is Olga Montufar Contreras, and I am a person with many identities in my life: I am a woman, I am indigenous, and I have a disability.

Like many people, I have questioned my existence. I could not find the answers in the past, but now I understand that God and the universe have built the foundation of great work inside me. The Word of God says that «we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand» (Ephesians 2:10).

I am lucky to live a normal life, a chance that has been denied to other indigenous women with disabilities. I have a husband who shares my same ideals of love and respect. We have built our house together with our own hands. We have animals and raise our own vegetables. We breed rabbits, and that income helps us cover the services that are available in

our indigenous community, like drinking water or electricity. It is also enough to pay some of the maintenance fees for our dirt roads. In our indigenous worldview, respect for Mother Earth is the basis of our philosophy of life. We do not have Internet services in our community, but that does not pose an obstacle to defending the rights of indigenous people with disabilities.

My work for the defence of human rights began in 1993, when I took part in a working group in Mexico that gave rise to the current Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) of the United Nations (ratified in 2007). From 2008 on, I have helped develop shadow reports on the human rights of indigenous people with disabilities in Mexico. In 2010, inspired by the CRPD, I initiated a lobbying process for the recognition of the human rights of indigenous people with disabilities within the indigenous peoples' movement. In 2016, I had the opportunity to explain the situation of indigenous people with disabilities in the European Union with an emphasis on the rights of indigenous children with disabilities. In 2017, I participated in drafting the project «Bridging the Gap II», which established the inclusion of indigenous people with disabilities within the foreign policies of the EU for the first time. Based to this work, I was elected chairwoman of the Indigenous Persons with Disabilities Global Network and coordinate the Latin American and Caribbean Network of Indigenous Women with Disabilities.

Thanks to these experiences and a visit to Mission 21 in Basel, Switzerland, I've discovered that today it is necessary to study theology in order to understand why people with disabilities lag behind nondisabled persons and why they bear painful stigmas that turn into self-discrimination, which also affects our families.

## Women and Gender Program

In all its activities, Mission 21 advocates the establishment of gender equality and justice. Together with women's networks, church and organizational 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. It also supports Gender Mainstreaming processes in development programs and facilitates spaces for exchange experiences and building knowledge.

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

# Remembering Tapi Omas Ihromi–Simatupang

21 April 1930 – 5 August 2018

By Marie–Claire Barth–Frommel

University of Indonesia Professor Tapi Omas Ihromi-Simatupang, SH, MA, was the sixth of eight siblings from a Christian family in North Sumatra. Her father, a postal clerk, wanted to give his children the best education possible, so he would gather them together in the evening to discuss an event or an article in order to arouse their curiosity and to increase their knowledge. Her mother, who supported the family with a very low income and hard work in the vegetable garden, expected her children to take responsibility within the family.

Omas attended school during the war years. In those days, she was taught in her tribal language (Batak), then in Dutch, afterwards in Japanese, and finally in Indonesian, the language that was spoken when she became a teacher.

Her second brother, who was general of the Liberation Army and later chairman of the World Council of Churches, invited her to Jakarta. After moving to the city, she decided to further her knowledge and began studying law at the University of Indonesia. As a Christian, Omas actively participated in the Gerakan Mahasiswa Kristen Indonesia (Indonesian Christian Students' Association) and later became chairwoman of the institution's central board.

Since international relations were already important at that time, the Basel Mission sent a young theologian who was the former secretary of the Swiss Christian Students' Association and an interpreter for the World Council of Churches to serve as a study advisor in Jakarta. I, Marie-Claire Barth-Frommel, author of these lines, visited 10 local groups and helped their leaders create programs and carry out biblical studies. What meaning did a Biblical text have at the time it was told and written? What meaning does it have today in a very different context?

Omas also applied this method in law, in the clash of Biblical texts with the cultural customs of regional cultures, as well as with the new conditions resulting from urban expansion. We had exciting discussions. I had to learn the language and culture, I often did not feel confident and made mistakes, but I could ask Omas about my doubts, and she always answered critically, concisely, and clearly. A close friendship arose between us. Professionally, both of us wanted to train people and not just pass on knowledge to them, but stimulate reflection and encourage them to put what they learned to the service of others.

In 1958, Omas received a Fulbright scholarship to study cultural anthropology at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York. Subsequently, she married Ihromi, a theologian from West Java and former secretary-general of the Indonesian Christian Students' Association. Both returned to their country in 1963 with their little daughter Nia, after receiving their masters degrees.

Omas began her career as a lecturer at the University of Indonesia, and Ihromi was at the Jakarta Theological Seminary.



Prof Tapi Omas with Marie-Claire Barth-Frommel (Photo Mission 21)

Omas gave introductory lectures on legal anthropology to 200 students and then divided the course into groups of 30 participants, who enriched what they had heard under the guidance of assistants. She trained these assistants in seminar sessions and involved them in concrete «projects», e.g., Women and Family Planning (the government program barely reached poor urban areas), Woman in Her Role as Mother and Worker, and in cooperation with Leiden University of the Netherlands, Marriage Law and Cultural Diversity. She encouraged countless students and helped those who hesitated to gain self-confidence, especially people from remote areas. Many of her students later worked for social institutions such as non-governmental organizations.

Omas was involved in the establishment of sociology and politics as sciences, and in collaboration with a colleague, she advocated for the creation of the Institute for Women's Studies at the Faculty of Law. She was a good team player, knew very well when to give way to a colleague for the sake of the cause, and remained modest. As for money, she only cared about what was needed to cover the family's living expenses. She was an absolutely honest and reliable person. She raised feminist issues in such a way that they were relevant to research and social development and thus exerted a strong influence.

After her retirement she lost her second daughter, a very talented economist, as well as her husband. Although her physical strength diminished at this stage, she remained clear-headed and was able to devote much time to her two grandchildren.

# Towards Diversity, Subjectivity, and Communion in Asia

By Hsiu Chuan Lin

The Asia Fellowship of Mission 21 Partners (ASF) has launched a new book titled «Mission 21 in Asia – Towards Diversity, Subjectivity, and Communion».

A retrospective on the ASF from the 1990s to today, this new publication seizes the moment to clarify the role of the Asia Fellowship and to enhance partnership among member churches in Asia. The ASF is a participant organization of Mission 21, a mutually supportive worldwide community of churches, missions, and organizations.

The book also offers interested readers a deeper understanding of the mission in Asia, exploring the goals, purpose, and methods of the mission field. While only covering a small portion of ASF experiences, the topics in the book from the mission's grassroots will help those who seek theological reflections on the Asian context.

Voices of Asian women are often suppressed, yet this book includes four female authors who speak out about different issues in Asia from their different viewpoints. They include Yoo Jin Choi, a Korean theologian at Honam Theological University and Seminary, who presents Asian feminist theology as a multifaceted movement of praxis and reflection leading to the flourishing all of Asian women based on and in accordance with the works of our trinitarian God.

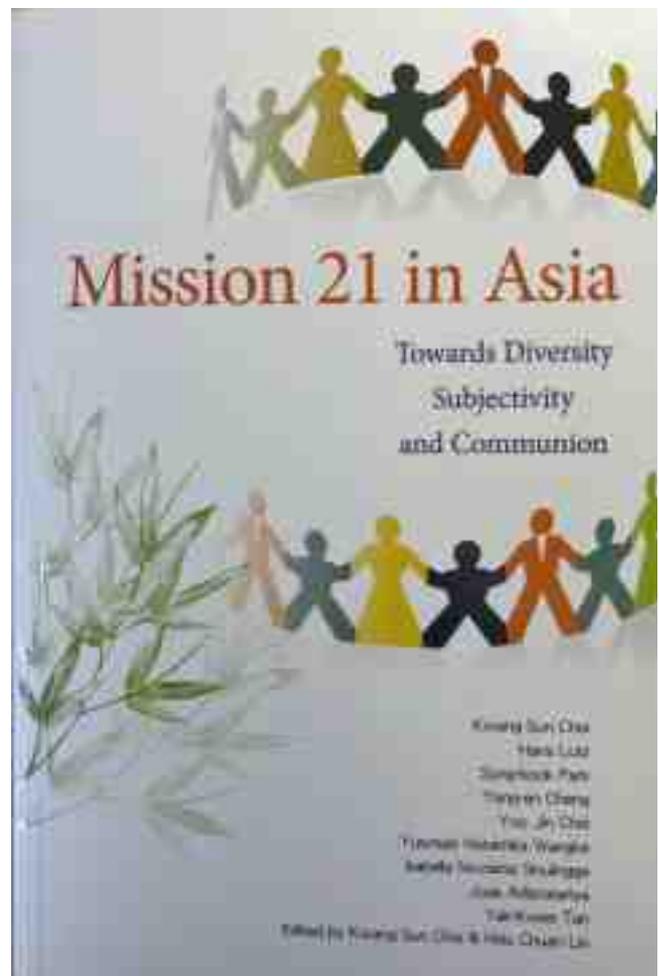
In another chapter, Vistamika Wangka, a full-time student in the post-graduate program of Gender Studies at the Centre for Strategic and International Studies at the University of Indonesia, delves more specifically into understanding the experiences of women migrants working as domestics in Indonesia and Hong Kong on the basis of her personal efforts with migrant workers.

In a related chapter, Isabella Novsima Sinulingga, Adjunct Lecturer at Jakarta Theological Seminary, focuses on people with intellectual disabilities who are homeless and live on the streets. She contends that women with intellectual disabilities, who have been deemed as «abnormal» by society, are actually participating in missio Dei.

## How important is this book?

As Stephen B. Bevans, Professor of Mission and Culture at Catholic Theological Union, said, «This is a book on mission in Asia, written by Asians, inspired by the Asian context, and addressed to Asian Christians. My hope, however, is that its readership will be even wider. North American and European Christians, Christians from the Pacific, African and Latin American Christians will be inspired and challenged by these essays, written by their Asian sisters and brothers. These are essays that deal with deeply Asian issues, but they are also burning issues in the entire church. My hope is that as many Christians as possible will profit from the Asian wisdom so admirably on display in these pages.»

Editor-in-chief: Rev. Kwang Sun Choi; Assistant Editor: Ms. Hsiu Chuan Lin; Art Designer: Ms. Hui-Ling Chou; Publisher: Taosheng Publishing House and Asian Theologians.



# A therapeutic re-reading of the Bible

By Nidia Victoria Fonseca Rivera<sup>1</sup>



Patriarchal culture and global capitalism are sustained by a power that assigns identities and roles to women and men so that they become multipliers of the culture. A common symptom of that multiplier effect is gender violence. Due to emotional and social circumstances, women, children, and people with disabilities are the most affected by gender violence, especially if they are impoverished, indigenous, black, or live in

rural areas. How can we give them a voice? How can we support them in their psychosocial and emotional trauma?

Through our church experience, we visited vulnerable communities to strengthen them through a five-step method:

1. **Breaking the silence** about family and community secrets and creating safe spaces based on equal relationships, sharing life stories, and trying to define the psychosocial trauma expressed in five types of violence: economic, physical, sexual, cultural, and emotional.
2. **Ceding the floor**, encouraging people to speak out by reading the Bible together in four steps:
  - a) **Oral reading** –The biblical text is read simultaneously by all the participants, no matter their age, first during the assembly and then in groups. The groups perform scenes from the text. After that, the same biblical text is read again but from other versions of the Bible, which allows us to clarify the meaning of some words and to notice the difficulties of the text in our native language.
  - b) **Immersive reading** – The participants tell us what the text is about. According to reception theory, each person interprets the message of a text in a different way, depending on their emotional state at the time of reading.
  - c) **Transformative reading** – To gain an insider's view of the situation by reading the text (scenes, main actions, characters, themes, sentences that are repeated, parallel passages in the same book and in other books of the Bible), we undertake an analysis of the context before and after the text was written to understand its function. Later, the text is dramatized by the group and the participants relate what they felt during the theatrical performance. Facts not mentioned in the text or

what could have happened based on the facts that were recounted are also discussed.

- d) **Celebratory reading** – We go back to the teachings of the text and look at our interpretation of the text during the immersive reading. What we learned from the rereading process and the transformation generated by a deep study of the text are systematized. The session concludes with a liturgical element.
3. **Offering support in order to reorganize the story of life**, breaking the cycle of learned hopelessness and self-exclusion, rebuilding resilience, creating paradigms of life, and accepting, overcoming, and freeing the trauma. As Paulo Freire used to say, we are taking care of the fragile hope, searching for lost hope and guiding the hope without a course (Freire, 2005).
4. **Giving meaning to personal existence** through the love experienced in community life as well as through agape, the eucharist, and the new meaning that baptism and confirmation acquire.
5. **Empowering through advocacy at the church**, public and political levels.

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<sup>1</sup> Pastor of the Wesleyan Methodist Church of Costa Rica and Professor of Practical Theology at the Latin American Biblical University.

# Religious fundamentalism in the central region of Peru

by Ebed Grijalva Yauri

One manifestation of fundamentalism is seen in the large number of protestant churches in the region that promote a literal reading of biblical texts. This form of reading the Bible strengthens the authority of men over women and fails to take into account any contextual, literary, or historical elements.

If we consider that «the Bible does not specifically teach that the mankind should take responsibility for the place they live in», this reading also affects the protection of the environment. Fundamentalist theology proposes a life beyond death that is more important than what is happening in today's world; hence the tendency to belittle social topics, because «sooner or later everything will be destroyed and then we will pass into eternal life».

Fundamentalism also rejects the role and importance of Andean cultures and the rainforest, relating them to witchcraft and demons. An emphasis is placed on biblical stories that recount a frontal attack against the religiousness of ancient peoples who «God ordered to eliminate».

This protestant sphere has promoted a campaign against what they call «gender ideology», a that position rejects not only the proposal of equal relationships, but also openly attacks all areas and churches that support such proposals. As a consequence, ecumenical spaces become the target of attacks.

Religious fundamentalism is also present among catholic groups. When dealing with themes such as gender, a conservative stance is adopted, affirming that a family must be arranged in a hierarchical order in which men and women



Ebed Grijalva Yauri, General Director of CEDEPAS Centro, Peru (Photo Mission 21)

have predetermined functions. Consequently, a practice of attack on «gender ideology» has been adopted that aligns with the protestant position.

Both theological positions influence political relations, since they serve to support leaders whose stances benefit fundamentalist ideologies. Likewise, political leaders seek to adjust their proposals to the demands of these religious groups in order to win followers.



Campaign «Fundamentalism and Women's Human Rights: Affirmative Action», 2018, Ecumenical Centre of Investigation (DEI), Costa Rica.

# Empowering Women for a Better Africa/World

By Suzan Mark<sup>1</sup>

The following article is a summary of the presentation by Rev. Flora Mpayo (Moravian Church, South West Tanzania Province) at the First African Moravian Women's Conference, held August 30 to September 2, 2018, at Tabata Moravian Church in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania, under the theme: «Moravian Women, Heeding God's Call in the 21st Century.» The 381 registered delegates were joined by many more with an estimated attendance of 470 women every day, who came from throughout Tanzania as well as South Africa, Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, and Eastern Congo.

Women's empowerment is very important in this time of building a better Church and a better society. Women should be empowered spiritually, mentally, and economically so that our society will experience a great change and have responsible children, in turn. The adage, «train a woman and have a successful society», is true: if we look at nations that encourage women's empowerment, we can see that their development is fast and real.

**Spiritual Empowerment:** As women in Africa, we are still struggling with our identity because others (men) try to define who we are, but we are not defining who we are ourselves. It is very dangerous for our ministry if we go by what people say and not what we know we are. So we need to struggle to know our identity as women in the Church. And the success of our ministry depends on our identity. We can have many positions in the Church, but when we don't know our identity and the Holy Spirit is not in us, we are like machines.

A woman needs to know her identity in Jesus so that whenever there are ups and downs, in the face of critics (men and women), she can still stand, focus, and move ahead. Jesus respected women and gave them power and strength, just as he did with men. Women should encourage one another, so that their talents and gifts may prosper. Teamwork is also very important for a better result, as well as a spirit of tolerance.

Women must have peace with God (Romans 5:1), the aroma of Christ (2 Cor. 2:15), and the temple of God (2 Cor. 3:1). They must know that they have been accepted by God, that the Holy Spirit is in them (1 Cor. 1:16), that they are not condemned (Romans 8:1), that they are representing God (2 Cor. 5:20), and that God will supply their needs.

Africa needs:

- Women who can read the signs of the time (Eccl. 3:1-8);
- Women who can seek the face of God through prayer, preaching, and testimonies;
- Women who have experienced God's favour and forgiveness;
- Women who can reach others with the Word;
- Women who can plan, look ahead, and think ahead;
- Women who spend their time according to priority and not aimlessly;
- Women who appreciate and shape themselves according to the time and know their responsibility as women, mothers, teachers, mentors, etc.;

All this will be possible through the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8, Matthew 28:18-20).

**Mental Empowerment:** This aspect has to do with the ability to reason well. Education is key to life, but women have been deprived for so long. There have been changes, but the educational gap between men and women is still wide. Yet, women who are mothers need training in different skills to help them support themselves as well as their families. Women's education also promotes better health, good decision making, good parenting, and improved support for the family, etc.

For women to best participate in both the Church and society, they need education because education has no end. Society must learn to support women's views, ideas, dream, vision, initiatives, etc., and women should be encouraged to pursue all levels of education for a better Africa.

**Theological Empowerment:** Women tend to shy away from theology because of their educational level, and the Church does not have enough programmes to support women. The call now is for Church to develop a plan for mentoring our girls for a better future of the Church.

Challenges:

- Women's human rights are yet to be achieved.
- Only a few women are in positions of leadership.
- Too much domestic responsibility rests on women, which hinders them from public participation.

<sup>1</sup> Director of Women's Ministry for the Church of the Brethren (EYN) in Nigeria

# Women in Mission Being Moved by the Spirit

By Josefina Hurtado Neira



Conference on World Mission and Evangelism in Arucha, Tanzania 2018 (Photo Mission 21)

After two days of exchanging experiences and imaginations, group discussions, plenaries, and songs, some 50 women from many different contexts came out with a message and recommendations for the Conference on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME).

On the first day of the conference — March 8, International Women’s Day — we read that message at two different times. Our message sought to draw attention to the holistic participation of women in mission, highlighting concrete actions for justice, peace, and reconciliation, as well as challenges concerning theological education and the lack of women’s representation in curriculum, among others. The following paragraphs are part of the message and recommendations:

*The women’s pre-conference acknowledges that the existing images of the church called to mission are not inclusive of women’s experiences and imaginations. The static understanding of the church structures does not allow full participation of all the people of God, especially women. With the global reality of limited access to leadership roles for women as well as existing prejudice against women’s leadership, we therefore call the churches, mission agencies, and the World Council of Churches to have intentionality for women’s leadership roles.*

We also acknowledge that many churches have been complicit, tacitly and intentionally, in perpetuating racism and discrimination, particularly against persons who are historically unrepresented or people with disabilities. This attitude has been reflected primarily in systems and structures of oppression, including the enslavement of persons and the trafficking of human beings. It has also been recognized that Christians have historically acted against the Gospel, participating in economic and systemic exploitation of resources — especially in the so-called Global South — which has resulted in perpetual poverty, conflicts, and wars. While we acknowledge that some churches have confessed the sin of racism and economic exploitation, it is not enough. This change in heart and mind (metanoia) will be a true sign of the movement

of the Spirit that leads to transformative discipleship and reconciliation.

Women also call the CWME conference delegates and participants to join in the mobilization of churches, mission agencies, and ecumenical partners to develop applicable teaching tools and resources to transform historical narratives to reflect the truth about policies that oppress and dehumanise. We need advocacy and awareness-building about the enslavement of persons, racism, xenophobia, and homophobia. In the face of increased refugee populations, we recognize that the refugee and migrant crises are a product of war, climate change, and dehumanising conditions, such as poverty, sexual and gender-based violence, conflict, and famine.

You can find the complete message and recommendations at the following link: [www.oikoumene.org/en/](http://www.oikoumene.org/en/)

# Women's Conference: Migration, Escape, and Persecution

Miriam Glass<sup>1</sup>

More than 100 participants interchanged personal stories combined with a great deal of expert knowledge with the aim of supporting women in difficult life circumstances. What this support might look like was examined in five workshops led by international specialists. For example, the workshop on dealing with trauma was conducted by peace activist Fatima Swartz of South Africa and Suzan Mark, Director of Women's Ministry for the Church of the Brethren (EYN) in Nigeria, a Mission 21 partner. Both women have themselves experienced traumatic situations and have made it their mission to help traumatised people.

## «Shuttling From Solution to Solution»

Escape, displacement, and migration were likewise addressed in the other workshops, such as «Ethics of Care,» «Refugees Get Space,» and «Empowering Female Migrant Workers.» The issue of religious fundamentalisms was also discussed.

In her opening address, Mission 21 Director Claudia Bandixen called on the participants to «not to move from problem to problem, but from solution to solution» when addressing migration and dealing with refugees. The women's conference reports proved that many women and men in the partner countries of Mission 21 are embracing this strategy in their day-to-day work, even under the most difficult conditions.

<sup>1</sup> Responsible Project Service at Mission 21 in Basel

*From our Workshop 'Ethics of Care' we bring as symbol the booklet with the title «Walking her Story – Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace» a compilation of visits to conflict zones and women and girls in distress. And as statement, that empowering girls by education is crucial. Resilient, comprehensive communities are needed, who are able to listen to the victims, to strengthen them and to heal their traumata. Individuals are not able to fulfil their needs on their own. (Esther Gisler)*



Women's Conference by Mission 21, Aarau 2018 (Photo Mission 21)

## «I walk with...» keeps Going

At the 2018 International Women's Pre-Synod, the solidarity action «I walk with...» was continued for another year. Suzan Mark of Nigeria and her commitment to gender justice and peace for disadvantaged women was at the centre of the action at the previous women's pre-conference in June 2017. In 2018, Obertina Modesta Johanis from Indonesia keeps the action going until the next women's pre-conference in 2019. Pastor Johanis is the financial manager and consultant at Pasundan-Durebang (My Sister's Place), a centre for victims of human trafficking and domestic violence in Bandung, under the auspices of the Pasundan Christian Church (GKP). She fights intensively against human trafficking and for the rights of young migrant women who go in large numbers to Hong Kong or Malaysia, where they are often mistreated and exploited. Many of them return to Indonesia severely traumatised, if they return alive at all. (Renate Bühler)

# Message from the Women's Conference of Mission 21

Aarau, 15 June 2018

It is the expression of the psalmist's prayer: «Hear my prayer, O Lord, and hear my cry; be not silent before my tears, for I am a stranger unto thee, a pilgrim like all my kings.» (Psalm 39:12)

The alliance from the economic and political fundamentalism together with religious fundamentalism is being instrumentalized to paralyse gender equality. Therefore, gathering with you the Mission Synod of Mission 21 in the spirit of trust and collaboration, we insist on denouncing the gender inequality which hinders the construction of a just society.

There are two remaining main burning issues about gender injustice, concerning all four continents, Africa, Latin America, Asia and Europa:

1. Lack of empowerment of women: in one hand, the preference of boys over girls education is still mentioned as a problem and in the other hand, high educated women have difficulties to get a decision making position and if they get such a position they earn less than men.
2. Violence against women: in Latin America, around 17 feminicides are reported every day. In Africa, war victims are displaced and raped. Rape increases HIV cases. Women raped by Boko Haram after giving birth to a child are left alone by the family and community. In Asia, is reported that recently 57 dead bodies (most of them are of women migrant workers or victims of human trafficking) were sent back to Nusa Tenggara Timor in Indonesia from abroad.

The following strategies have been pointed out as measures for empowerment of women and overcoming violence against women:

- Theological education and formation of the leadership. As examples: reading the Bible with the eyes of victims and online courses for the promotion of environmental justice with a focus on gender.
- Intercultural dialogues to generate strategies to fight against gender based violence and strengthen women's rights.
- Strengthen solidarity through advocacy giving importance to strategic alliances north/south and south/south. Building networks between partners from sending and receiving countries for the prevention of human trafficking, for example.

Convinced in the power of solidarity, we join and invite to join the Thursday in black campaign, as part of a global movement resisting attitudes and practices that permit rape and violence.

We invite the international network of Mission 21 to promote the action «I walk with...» as a sign of solidarity with Women who commit themselves to work for justice and peace.

- I walk with Women in Africa, Asia and Latin America suffering from gender injustice.
- I walk with Women fighting against all kinds of gender discrimination.
- I walk with Women fighting against violence.
- I walk with Women fighting for social justice towards women and gender equality.
- I walk with Women fighting for empowerment of women to have a flourishing life in solidarity.
- I walk with Women fighting for human dignity and preventing human trafficking.
- I walk with Women fleeing from war.
- I walk with Women whose children and relatives are living with HIV.
- I walk with Women who experience vulnerability because of climate change.
- I walk with Women suffering from feminicide.
- I walk with Women who experience vulnerability as a result of crisis and conflicts.
- I will walk with all the Asian, African, European and Latin American women, in solidarity with Mission 21, towards a flourishing life in Jesus Christ.

So, we invite you, the Mission Synod, to join us in the action «I Walk with ...» by supporting this message and action.

# Tools for Reflection and Transformation

## The Principles of Permaculture

By Susan Cabezas Cartes<sup>1</sup>

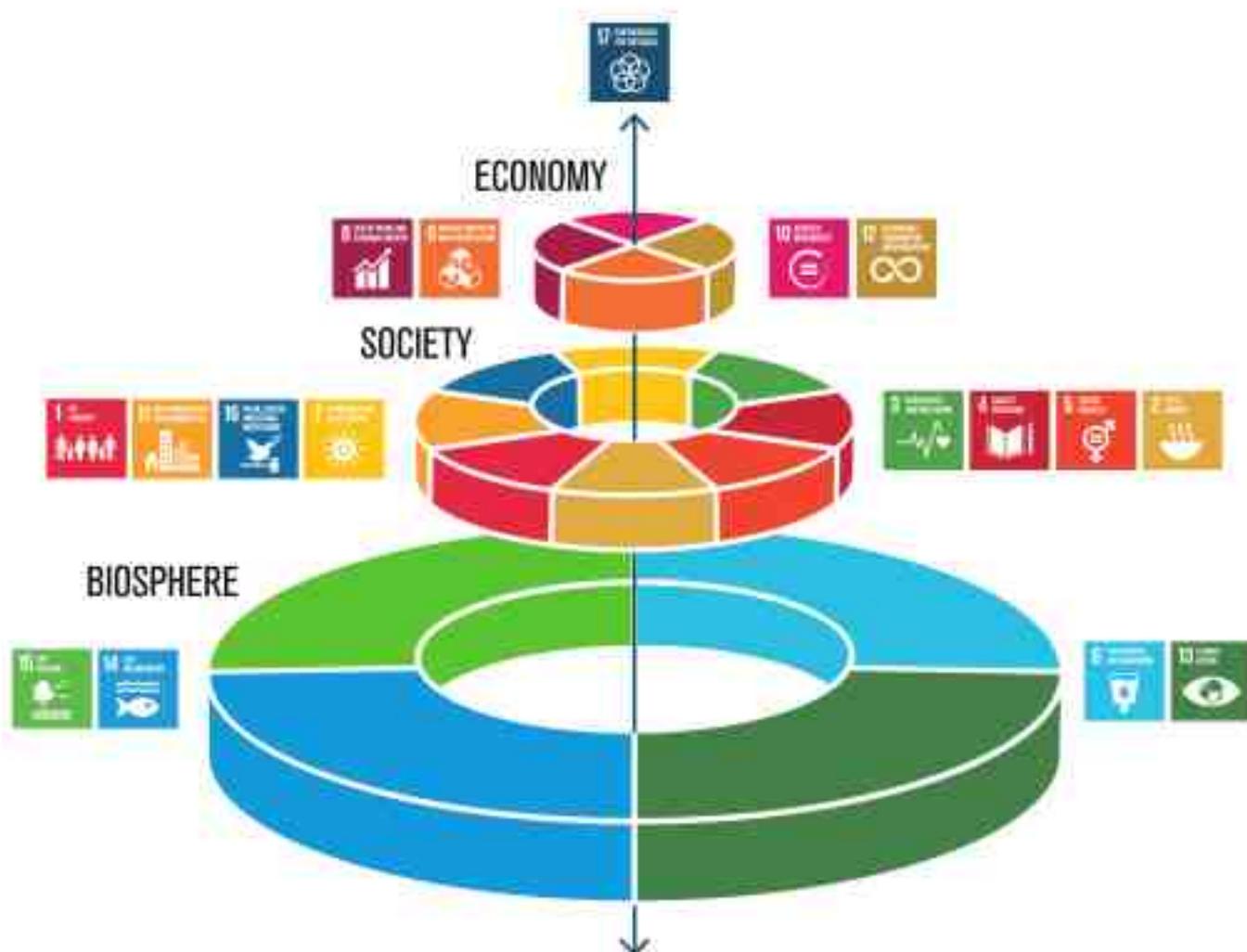
Permaculture has limitless meanings, but here are some commonalities and key points to help us to understand it. Permaculture uses nature as a guide and encourages us to think holistically. It is a solution-oriented design system, based on cooperation and connections that creates abundance and harmony.

Three ethics lie at the heart of permaculture: earth care, people care, and fair share. These straightforward guidelines can be used to orient our decisions and lifestyles. Looby Macnamara, author of *People & Permaculture: Caring & Designing for Ourselves, Each Other & The Planet* (Permanent Publications, 2012), urges us to ask: Are we caring for the Earth? Are we caring for people? Is our action fair?

These ethics identify why we want sustainability, and the following principles point to how to achieve it. The principles

are not isolated; they interact, varying in importance as need and relevance shift. For each principle, Macnamara proposes a series of self-reflection questions that I adapted for Mission 21's recent Training of Trainers in Advocacy for Women's Rights:

1. **Observe and interact:** What do I observe around me and with other people? What do I see or feel in myself, what's my body feeling, what's my intuition saying? What can I change?
2. **Catch and store energy:** What gives me energy? Am I making the best use of my current energy levels and opportunities? What activity would best suit this niche of time and space? Is my energy flowing or blocked?



# Tools for Reflection and Transformation

3. **Obtain a yield:** What are the yields available? Am I currently harvesting them? Are there other yields that could become available?
4. **Apply self-regulation and accept feedback:** Where am I receiving feedback from, e.g., my body, others, written, verbal? How can I monitor my progress? What's working well? What's not working so well? What can I appreciate about myself?
5. **Use and value renewable resources and services:** Where can I meet my needs with renewable resources? What can I create? Where can I cut down my consumption of non-renewable resources?
6. **Produce no waste:** Where is our own energy wasted or blocked? Where is my time being wasted? How can I prevent this? What needs maintaining in my life?
7. **Design from patterns to details:** What are the patterns present in my life? What are the useful patterns and what would I like to change?
8. **Integrate rather than segregate:** Are there aspects of my life I can bring together? Which of my friends could I introduce to one another?
9. **Use small and slow solutions:** Is there a small step in the right direction I could take today? Where am I likely to trip up if I go too fast?
10. **Use and value diversity:** How many roles do I have? Can I create a diversity of activities? What areas of my life would benefit from more diversity?
11. **Use and value edges and the marginal:** Where are the edges of my comfort zone? How can I expand these limits? How can I reach out to people on the edges of society?
12. **Creatively use and respond to change:** How can I use change to my advantage? Where and how am I resisting change? What gifts did the last big change in my life give me? What do I envision for my future?

## Permaculture and the Sustainable Development Goals

I usually hear that the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are unrealistic and beyond the reach of civil society and its organisations. However, during my stay in Cloughjordan Ecovillage in Ireland, I found a very interesting initiative to connect the SDGs with local communities. The idea was to invite small organisations to share what they have been doing in the field, including best practices, in order to address one of the goals. The results were presented in an interactive exhibit (see [www.cultivate.ie/community-resilience/1293-convergence-stories](http://www.cultivate.ie/community-resilience/1293-convergence-stories) for more information).

The SDGs can also be linked with the ethics of permaculture. Under the earth-care ethic, we find the goals related to biosphere, under people-care, the goals about society, and under fare share, the economic goals. The image better explains the idea of SDGs at different levels.

## Permaculture: A Journey

Permaculture gives me an opportunity to unite my interests and values in a holistic context in which nature, people, and the interconnections among them are the basis for building a more resilient and sustainable way of life. For many years, I have been exploring how to live in harmony with these elements, finding a balance among what I believe, what I do, and what I want to create.

Despite all the challenges I have faced on this journey, I still believe another world is possible, especially after I have seen so many proactive initiatives and passionate dreamers who are building communities, regenerating the soil, protecting animals, living off the grid without money or technology, creating economies of solidarity through cooperatives and support networks, and much more.

All of these initiatives have included some of the principles of permaculture, like the value of diversity, integrating rather than segregating, and accepting feedback. At a personal level, the principle of small and slow solutions resonates with me the most. I have learned the importance of accepting the rhythm of circumstances and understanding that there is no quick and easy solution to any problem. Like the snail, we must go step by step with certainty and towards more realistic goals.

<sup>1</sup> The author is an anthropologist and gender consultant.

## Advocacy and Women's Human Rights

By Catalina Schriber<sup>1</sup>

*One of the principal aims of Mission 21 is the empowerment of women to advocate for their rights and claims in the public sphere. In annual workshops, key representatives from partner organisations and cooperation programmes acquire necessary skills for this advocacy work in their respective contexts.*

### **Training of Trainers: Advocacy and Sustainability**

The «Advocacy for Women's Human Rights» programme was developed by the Women & Gender Desk and serves as a main line of action for Mission 21. The programme aims to raise awareness on women's human rights worldwide and to promote the empowerment of women and men from partner churches and organisations through international campaigns and workshops.

After two successful years, the Women & Gender Desk of Mission 21 organised the third Advocacy Workshop. Based on the concept of Training of Trainers (ToT) in Basel, Switzerland, the workshop offers women and men from partner churches and organisations an opportunity to access tools and knowledge, as well as a chance build networks and act as advocates for their rights at local, national and international levels. The participants pass on their knowledge in their own contexts, for example, by organising workshops, and as a result, they may gain political influence as multipliers.

From June 27 to 30, the third generation of multipliers came from the partner countries of Bolivia, Cameroon, Chile, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Indonesia, Malaysia, Nigeria, Peru, South Korea, Taiwan, and Tanzania. The 15 participants shared experiences and discussed daily challenges, strategies, and success stories in their work advocating for women's human rights. The methods used during the four-day workshop were very interactive and creative, providing the opportunity for active and concrete access to the concepts presented.

In addition to the issues of contextual theology and UN mechanisms, this year's focus emphasised advocacy and sustainability. Based on the 12 principles of permaculture for sustainable design principles and tools from David Holmgren's *Permaculture, Principles & Pathways: Beyond Sustainability* (2002), the participants looked at the concept of sustainability and its meaning for the multipliers of the ToT as well as the relevance of sustainable leadership for advocacy work.

During the public event on June 28, experts from the four continents — Africa, Asia, Latin America and Europe — shared

different perspectives on sustainability and its role in advocacy work promoting gender justice: for example, support for female pastors or gender equality in education. Based on the United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals, the causes of gender-based inequality and discrimination were analysed, as well as possible opportunities for action by state and civil-society actors. The participants' experiences as theologians and activists of faith-based organisations were of crucial interest for the event. It turned out that there is still need for action in the fields of education, freedom of speech, and religious fundamentalisms.

The 15 multipliers are now passing on the concepts, tools, and experiences gathered in the workshop in Switzerland to promote the common goal of gender justice in their home countries.

### **International Workshop: Advocacy for Women's Human Rights**

For the third consecutive year, in cooperation with the World Council of Churches, the Lutheran World Federation, the Church of Sweden, and Finn Church Aid, the Women & Gender Desk of Mission 21 organised the second part of the advocacy workshop in Geneva, Switzerland. From July 3 to 6, some 30 theologians and activists from Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Europe met to discuss the challenges that faith-based organisations face with regard to women's human rights and governmental responsibility for the implementation of the 17-Sustainable Development Goals set forth by the United Nations.

One focus addressed tools and instruments for advocacy work and gender mainstreaming, such as the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Implemented in 1981, the CEDAW has been ratified by 189 UN states to date and is the only internationally binding treaty that prevents discrimination against women. Once again, this year's highlight was the CEDAW Committee summer session visit at the Palais des Nations. This event offered the workshop participants an interesting insight into the structures and tools of the UN, and especially the CEDAW, as important mechanisms for advocacy.

<sup>1</sup> Advocacy Programme Officer Women and Gender Desk, Mission 21

# Info-Platform

## Meeting of Mission 21 Partners in Latin America



During September 26-28, 2018, the meeting of the Latin American partners of Mission 21 was held at Betania House, the Schoenstatt sanctuary in Achumani, La Paz, Bolivia. Fourteen women and 12 men gathered to work together toward the main goal of this session: to create a space for strengthening Mission 21 partners' exchange of knowledge about strategies and methodologies to promote gender justice.

With particular regard to the Latin American program of Mission 21, the participants identified strengths and weaknesses of the various partners, in order to define proposals for institutional support and fundraising projects that involve the different partners of Mission 21 in the region. Likewise, we strengthened the focal themes inside and among the networks through the exchange of materials, publications, and acquired learnings.

On Thursday, September 27, we had the opportunity to join the «Thursdays in Black Campaign» in solidarity with women who remain resilient in the face of injustice and violence. More information: [www.fmachaga.org](http://www.fmachaga.org)

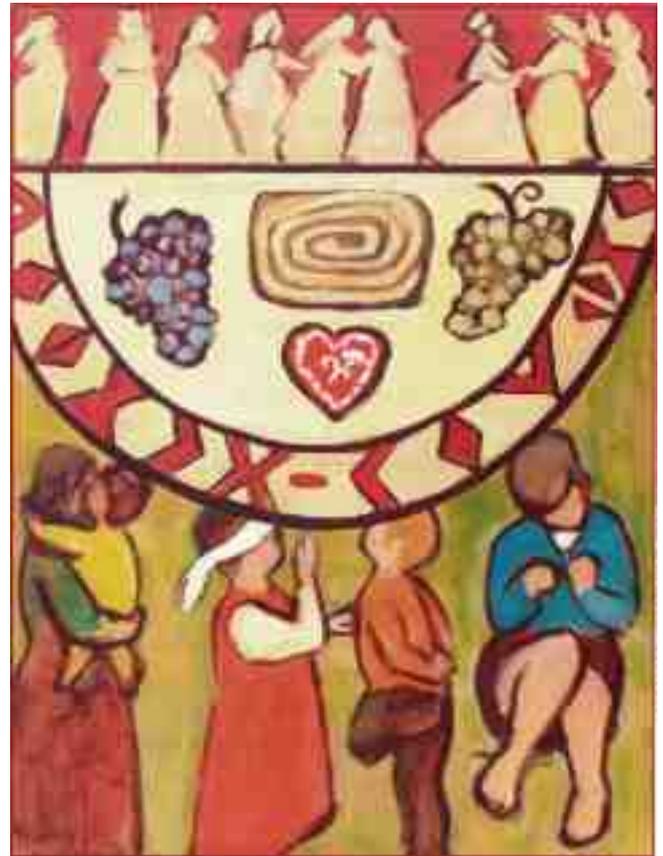
## Star Mountain delegation to the Ministry of Women, Palestine Moravian Mission Germany

On October 23, 2018, the Palestinian Ministry of Women's Affairs in Ramallah received a delegation from Star Mountain Rehabilitation Centre and the Palestinian Disability Coalition. The director of the Star Mountain, Ranya Karam, talked about the work done by this organisation. She identified several cases of abuse against women with disabilities, especially those with mental disabilities. The Minister agreed to review the Council of Ministers' resolution 9-2011 on women's shelters. These shelters currently do not accommodate women with mental and physical disabilities. The Minister received proposals of cooperation in the fight against the abuse of women. Star Mountain Rehabilitation Centre in Palestine is also supported by Mission 21.

[www.herrnhuter-missionshilfe.de/index.php?id=600](http://www.herrnhuter-missionshilfe.de/index.php?id=600)

## World Day of Prayer, Slovenia 2019: «Come – Everything Is Ready»

[www.weltgebetstag.de/en](http://www.weltgebetstag.de/en)



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CH-4009 Basel

E-Mail: [jolanda.urfer@mission-21.org](mailto:jolanda.urfer@mission-21.org)