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# Women's Letter

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



## Small Actions – Big Impact!

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## Cover

«I walk with...»: Suzan Mark and Rahel Weber; Small actions – big Impact! (Photo: Christoph Rácz)



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«I walk with...» (Fotos Christoph Rácz)





# Editorial

## Dear Readers



Every day can be full of actions that go unnoticed. Repetitive work on a small scale is rendered invisible in the shadow of public actions perceived as important. In this Letter, 500 years after a reform that mobilized men and women to seek relationships of justice,

we focus on actions that began as small initiatives but have come to impact society as a whole, thanks to the persistence of those who promote them. We highlight work by leaders of the women's networks of Mission 21 and campaigns that inspire us to observe our environment and take action for relationships of justice.

On the cover, we share the «I walk with...» initiative launched in the context of the Women's Conference, prior to the Mission 21 Synod. In a special focus on the work of Suzan Mark, we tell this delegate of the African Continental Assembly: «We walk with you in your work with girls and women displaced from their homes in Nigeria. You are not alone in your tireless efforts searching for ways to offer refuge and heal so much pain.»

From Indonesia, Juberlian Padele reflects on her own work as a leader in the post-conflict political context after the fall of the dictator Suharto. Mutual trust, shared authority and a spirit of cooperation are key terms that have guided her leadership in ecclesiastical and pedagogical spaces. She also tells us about Indonesian women who were traditional spiritual leaders: the «To Po Wurake,» who were crowned with a «Tali Bonto» during their initiation ceremony. These traditions paved the way for the acceptance of women's ordination in their church. Marie-Claire Barth, Padele's dear friend, shares some elements of the social, political and religious context in which Padele carries out her work and which are so indis-

pensable today.

The feminist women's movement has built and sustained an agenda of consciousness-raising campaigns on issues and situations that are difficult to acknowledge because they break with idealized images of families and societies. The 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence Campaign has become an important milestone for many organizations. It begins on November 25 every year—in memory of the Mirabal sisters from the Dominican Republic, victims of femicide during the Trujillo dictatorship—and ends on December 10, International Human Rights Day.

For the third year in a row, as a coalition of ecumenical organizations, we have coordinated work under a common slogan to promote the exchange of information, tools and knowledge. This year, the motto «Precious in the eyes of God» guides the campaign to raise awareness in our communities about sexual violence endured by girls and women around the world. With its long history of political advocacy and work for the human rights of women in Indonesia, the Association of Indonesian Theologically Trained Women (Persekutuan wanita berpendidikan Teologi di Indonesia, PERUATI) contributes to the international campaign by addressing burning issues at local levels. In 2016, PERUATI highlighted human trafficking, violence against young women in the church, women's role in the promotion of diversity, child marriage and radicalization. Ruth Ketsia Wangkai, the coordinator of PERUATI, shares a report on the activities.

Every Thursday, we wear black to show that we are part of a worldwide movement against attitudes and practices that tolerate sexual abuse and violence. Inspired by the mothers of the Plaza de Mayo in Argentina, the Women in Black of Israel and Palestine, women in Rwanda and Bosnia and the Black Sash movement of South Africa, the World Council of Churches began this campaign during the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women (1988-1998).

Just as campaigns have the power to raise the visibility of critical topics and mobilize us to act, awards also shine a spotlight on people whose work is emblematic and inspiring. We are happy and proud to share the news that leaders intimately

involved with Mission 21's work have received an award or are soon to be recognized. Rebecca Dali from Nigeria has been recognized for her work with victims of Boko Haram terrorism. Mery Kolimon from Indonesia was nominated to receive the



Sylvia Michel Prize, which promotes and supports projects anywhere in the world that support the leadership of women in the reformed churches. Kolimon, the first woman president of the GMIT church in Indonesia, will travel to Switzerland in March 2018 to receive the award.

But those who fight for the defense of human rights often forget about themselves and may even become seriously ill as a result of physical and mental exhaustion. Yantikarya Mshelia from Nigeria encourages us to practice self-care, sharing body therapy techniques that are easy to do anywhere. She also reminds us of the importance of networking and sharing information through mass media. Special thanks to Capacitar International for its efforts of solidarity around the world.

From Peru comes the testimony of Etel Nina Cáceres, who recounts her path, step by step, through multiple small actions. Today, looking back, she can see the tremendous impact of her work in her own life and in many communities. In this journey, women's theology and political participation form a righteous combination.

Every year, delegates from women's networks in Africa, Asia and Latin America meet in Switzerland at a conference prior to the Mission 21 Synod. In 10 points, the Declaration for Gender Equality expresses the priorities from different contexts and reaffirms the participants' commitment to «be agents of change, to overcome gender inequalities and to thrive towards a world with gender justice».

In the Tools for Reflection and Transformation section, we share the method of contextual bible study developed by Sarojini Nadar of South Africa.

The Advocacy Program for women's human rights is consolidated in Mission 21's annual agenda and reports on the second generation of workshops held in Basel and Geneva

with the international network of leaders from Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America.

In the Info-Platform section, we share news from our partner organizations. And finally, with Tsena Malalaka, we celebrate the 2017 Marga Bührig Award given to the authors of the bilingual collection *Nous avons un désir* / There is something we long for. Our team has been inspired by and adopted the poem, «God», by Moni Egger, who in her last paragraphs tells us:

May it be now!  
Let every human  
Be soaking wet  
And let him, let her,  
Spray drops of justice  
As they shake themselves

And let every action  
Let every word  
Leave a glittering trace  
Of dewdrops behind

May it be now!

And in the sea of justice  
Heaven is mirrored

Amen

Josefina Hurtado Neira  
Head of Women and Gender Desk  
Mission 21

### Women and Gender

In all its activities, Mission 21 advocates the establishment of gender equality 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.

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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 organizational 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.

# Tali Bonto: Crowning Women Leaders in the Faith

by Juberlian Padele



Juberlian Padele, Dean of the Theological School in Tentena, Indonesia (Photo Dorothee Adrian)

«Tali Bonto» is the name of the crown worn long ago by woman priests in the Poso region of Central Sulawesi, Indonesia. «Tali Bonto» on the head of an adult woman was a sign that she was «To Po Wurake,» a sacred ritual leader. She was believed to have the religious capacity to meet «Pue,» the supreme God, and was regarded as mediator between earth and heaven. In her mediation with God, the crowned lady communicated the personal and/or communal petitions from the people on earth.

«To Po Wurake» were educated through a discipleship system. Some young virgins were taught how to live as religious leaders and perform the traditional rituals. If they mastered the secrets of life and the sacred rituals, they would be crowned with «Tali Bonto» as «To Po Wurake.»

This tradition of important religious positions for women opened the possibility for church members to accept women's ordination in the church. Our church, the Christian Church of Central Sulawesi (GKST), was the first to have a woman as Synod President.

## My Leadership Experience as General Chairperson of the GKST Synod (2012-2016)

I began my involvement as a leader in a time when the post-conflict situation was still affecting the church leadership. After the fall of the dictator Suharto in 1998, there were acute conflicts among tribal and religious groups—Muslims and Christians—especially in Eastern Indonesia. At the turn of the century, lack of mutual trust, feelings of superiority, exploited social status and other issues strongly affected our church management. As the second Chairperson of the Synod, I had to learn about and adjust myself to the situation, especially after I had been away for 15 years as a lecturer teaching theology in Makassar, South Sulawesi, and getting a doctorate in

Salatiga, Central Java (with grateful thanks to Basel Mission for the scholarship).

To get to the roots of our church problems, I employed social analyses, especially regarding patriarchal traditions. Then I identified some strategic approaches. First, I worked to develop mutual trust; I did my best to be trusted, both by my colleagues and by church members, to reshape the scattered fragments of our church life. Second, I applied the principle of sharing authority with my colleagues, while I strictly monitored how they implemented our policies. This strategy also empowered them to regain their positions as trusted leaders. The third strategy was a bottom-up approach, a principle from pastoral theology of conflict resolution. All parties were heard, and every single individual was treated as important subject. Lastly, I strived to develop networking to replace the traditional, competitive mentality with a spirit of cooperation.

These strategic approaches eventually helped me gain mutual trust and minimize conflict at the grassroots. Proof of success can be seen in the increased financial support from our congregations to the Synod. I also managed to prepare future leaders for the church and lecturers for our School of Theology in Tentena STT, especially in my role as Dean of our higher Theological Seminary since January 2017. My personal challenge as a single woman was very strong, but I totally submitted myself as servant of God and happily endured the consequences.



# Contextual Theology in Indonesia

Marie-Claire Barth

Most Indonesian churches are rooted in a specific ethnic culture. These cultures were despised during the dictatorship (1965-1998). Nowadays, many Indonesians are looking for their cultural roots, which is an important context for the church's proclamation.

Another important context is the coexistence of different religious communities: 80-85% of Indonesians are Muslim; 8-12% are Christian. Mutual respect and good relationships among moderate Muslims and moderate Christians are cul-

tivated, yet «rigorous Islam» and fundamental Christianity threaten these relations. Modernization, urbanization, consumerism-driven lifestyles of the rich (including corruption and sluggish economic development) form another context. Therefore, to reach out to the people, theology and the church's proclamation should be contextual. The Bible and church history (including dogmas) should also be seen in the historic context of the texts and traditions. This dual orientation shapes the theology promoted by Juberlian Padele in her Theological College.



Rev. Dr. h.c. Marie-Claire Barth, long-time ecumenical collaborator of the Basel Mission in Indonesia and former leader of the Women and Gender Desk of Mission 21; Doris Muñoz (Photo Dorothee Adrian)

## 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence 2016

The year 2016 marked the first time that PERUATI, in partnership with the Special Desk for Women and Gender of Mission 21, implemented the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence Campaign. This activity was held in coordination with Indonesia's National Commission on Violence Against Women. As a women's movement organization, PERUATI has played a very important role in the field of human rights and advocacy, at both the local and national levels, for about eight years. Four local boards (BPD) of PERUATI were involved in this partnership program, each highlighting important local issues such as human trafficking (BPD Sumba Timur, East Nusa Teng-

gara Province), violence against young women in the church (BPD Tapanuli, North Sumatra), women's role in nurturing diversity (BPD Minahasa, North Sulawesi) and early marriage, human trafficking and radicalism (BPD Jabodetabek, Jakarta and Banten). The rising tide of radicalism in Indonesia has been a major issue that threatens the unity and diversity of the nation. We think this problem must be overcome by inviting all parties to discuss protection and human rights, education and religious virtues and also to campaign against violence to nurture the diversity of Indonesia.

# Rebecca Dali From Nigeria Receives Prestigious Award



Rebecca Dali (Photo Mission 21)

This year's Sergio Vieira de Mello Award has been given to Nigerian activist Rebecca Dali. In recognition for her efforts with terror victims: the girls and women who were kidnapped and later released by the terrorist militia Boko Haram face enormous difficulties resuming their lives. «They are stigmatized,» says Dali, «their husbands, society and sometimes even their own parents reject them.»

Dali founded the Centre for Caring, Empowerment and Peace Initiatives (CCEPI) in 1989 to assist widows and orphans living in precarious conditions. Since 2009, when the violence perpetrated by Boko Haram intensified, CCEPI's work has focused, above all, on victims of terror. Despite a partial lack of security, CCEPI has carried out pioneering work as one of the first organizations to provide services for internally displaced people.

In line with our autumn campaign, "Wanted: Reformers From Today", Rebecca Dali is an agent of change. With tremendous courage and sacrifice, but also having been through sound theological training, she gets a lot done in society.

Although the prize money of 5,000 CHF is more of a «symbolic amount,» according to the Sergio Vieira de Mello Foundation, we still hope that the award contributes to drawing attention to and support for Dali's work at an international level. In her opinion, it is "a sign from God". As she puts it «This award urges me to get even more committed. This really helps!».

The information in this article is mostly taken from an article posted August 22, 2017, on the information portal AllAfrica, <http://allafrica.com/stories/201708220233.html>.

## Trauma Healing Workshop in Nigeria

Yamtikarya Mshelia



My name is Dr. Yamtikarya Mshelia. I am a member of Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa (Church of the Brethren) in Nigeria. I am currently in charge of the Theological Education by Extension (TEE) College of our church. I'm also the Coordinator of the Female Theologians of our church. Last February, I had the

opportunity to participate in the Trauma Healing Workshop on Body Therapy organized by Mission 21 in collaboration with Dr. Genevieve van Waesberghe, a medical professional and trainer for Capacitar International Africa ([www.capacitar.org](http://www.capacitar.org)). The workshop took place in our country. Thanks to Mission 21 for organizing such a helpful workshop.

Since then, I have engaged in training different groups of



Yamtikarya Joseph Mshelia is coordinator of the Female Theologians of EYN in Nigeria (Photo Mission 21)

people on the body therapy exercises. I started with the Theological Education by Extension staff. They are now into it, and they say that the different exercises are helping them to not take painkillers so much anymore.

This May, I held the same training for TEE Supervisors. They have shared lots of testimonies about how the different exercises are helping them. It would be difficult to mention all their stories, but one of the supervisors who suffers from arthritis said that since May, he has stopped taking medication. As a result, he is now training many people on body therapy.

I was also invited to train Sunday School teachers. Most

of them comment that the exercises make them feel better; they sleep more soundly and have fewer headaches, less body pain, less tension. Many are now benefitting from the exercises. Anywhere I go, especially in meetings or gatherings, sometimes I ask for permission to do some of the exercises, and as a result, many are now benefitting from the different exercises.

Once again, I am very grateful to Mission 21 and Capacitar International.

## Thursdays in Black: Resistance and Resilience

The campaign is simple but profound. Wear black on Thursdays. Wear a pin to declare you are part of the global movement resisting attitudes and practices that permit rape and violence. Show your respect for women who are resilient in the face of violence. Encourage others to join you.

Often black has been used with negative racial connotations. In this campaign, Black is used as a color of resistance and resilience.

### What is the Thursdays in Black Campaign?

Thursdays in Black grew out of the World Council of Churches (WCC) Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women (1988-1998), in which the stories of rape as a weapon of war, abuse, violence and many tragedies that grow outward from such violence became all the more visible. But what also became visible was women's resilience, agency and personal efforts to resist such violations.

The campaign was inspired by:

- The Mothers of the Disappeared in Buenos Aires, Argentina, who on Thursdays protested in the Plaza de Mayo against the disappearance of their children during the violent dictatorship.
- The Women in Black in Israel and Palestine, who con-

tinued to protest against war and violence.

- Women in Rwanda and Bosnia, who were protesting against the use of rape as a weapon of war during the genocide.
- The Black Sash movement in South Africa protesting against apartheid and its use of violence against black people.

This global ecumenical campaign has been adopted by many of the WCC's 348 member churches, national councils and ecumenical and inter-religious partners, academic institutions, student associations, and more.

Join this movement of people and organizations that can make a difference to individuals, communities and national and international policy forums.

Thursdays in Black pins are available in English, French, Spanish, German, Swedish and Swahili.

Share your Thursdays in Black campaign photos on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. Use #ThursdaysinBlack #WCC.

For more information on how you can join the campaign and order Thursdays in Black pins, contact: [media@wcc-coe.org](mailto:media@wcc-coe.org).

[www.oikoumene.org/en/what-we-do/Thursdays-in-Black](http://www.oikoumene.org/en/what-we-do/Thursdays-in-Black)



# An Experience of Liberation, Savored and Lived Intensely

Etel Nina Cáceres

I would like to speak about my experiences along the journey with women who are passionate about the utopia of a fair, inclusive, fraternal and caring world.

It is evident that gender relations do not form part of an agenda of change and are considered as secondary or dispensable matters in the fields of social and political action as well as within religious practices. Gender gaps and asymmetries are still pending issues for democracy, development and faith.

From the perspective of faith, as well as those of political and social engagement, the utopia of a fair, inclusive, fraternal and caring world has elements that challenge us: gender equality and justice. An authentic liberation of society, in its entirety, is not possible if the injustice and oppression that women experience is not stopped. This challenge made us think about different ways of action, and we finally chose to engage in processes of theological and socio-political empowerment aimed at generating personal and social change.

Our first task was to create awareness of the fact that women do not have the same rights as men in the churches or in society. The second was to understand that male dominance has become institutionalized by the current political and economic system. And the third task was to think about how we should respond in the face of these realities. The unanimous answer to this question was to initiate processes of empowerment for liberating action and network-building. We understood that the collective and political struggle for equality, as a living principle within the churches and society, was the best answer we could give, and such a response also allows the experience of sisterhood.

Thus, we began the journey, an experience of liberation, savored and lived intensely with so many other women.

## Women's Theological work

The first action we undertook was to create a space for a group of women who were thirsty for liberation. We gather to reflect on our experience of being Christians and citizens in this world. In our action, we feel protected by the inclusive message of Jesus and the legal regulations that have been achieved through the struggle for our rights.

We began to read the Bible with a gender perspective and resolved to create a path to make visible the prophetic and liberating legacy of women in the history of salvation.

The methodology used was learned from Bolivian theologian Sofía Chipana: to be able to perceive reality, question it, deconstruct and reconstruct it and thereby experience a liberating spirituality. The rites, dances, and music were also important elements of our meetings because they helped us adopt self-care practices and learn to care for our bodies, which in our regions are mainly destined to carry heavy loads and

bear babies, but now we also use them to dance.

We were encouraged by the biblical stories about women like Shiphrah, Puah and Miriam (the midwives), the mother of Moses (women who protected life), Tamar (a strong woman who did not resign herself to injustice), Judith (a woman who acted independently and confidently), Ruth (a caring woman), Esther (a daring woman) and Deborah (a female leader). It is impossible not to learn from these women who have suffered but were able to take risks, overcome social and religious conventions, defend their people, make decisions and take action.

Going against the grain and encouraged by the prominent role women played in the Bible, some women of this group ventured to announce their candidacy in recent elections, and some of them were elected as members of local government. We realize that the social environment pushes our faith to the challenge of liberation because it reveals the dramatic situation of women in our region. However, as the following testimonials show, we also saw that «new winds are blowing» by developing new social relations.

- Women engage in theology, defend their lives and the lives of their children. We are co-creators of life with God.
- We have learned to be alert, to be vigilant about our rights and to defend them in order to achieve full participation in society and the church.
- This space fills us with life and courage, so we do not see ourselves as marginalized individuals, but as protagonists.
- The experience of women in the Bible encourages and empowers us to break the silence.
- Now, we have the task to formulate a Regional Plan for Equal Opportunities and Local Plans for Equal Opportunities to make gender equality and justice reality in our communities.

## Women's Political Participation

We implemented a program for strengthening the political participation of women through the Female Leadership School under the motto «From Silence to the Word and from the Word to Liberating Action», which started its activities in 2015. Forty female leaders from the eight districts of the provinces of Canchis and Cusco participated in this program. We carried out workshops, initiated social dialogue with authorities and started political advocacy and awareness campaigns and activities.

The workshops are based on a comprehensive leadership model that embraces four aspects of our life connected to the four elements of nature: resources – earth; emotions and relationships – water; actions – fire; ideas and thoughts – air.



Etel Nina Cáceres is director of the South-Andean Institute for Research and Acting in Solidarity (ISAIAS), Peru  
(Photo: Mission 21)

The methodology is participatory: it starts with an exchange of personal experiences and continues with group discussions. It includes practical tools, testimonies, presentations, working groups and celebrations with rites, dances and songs that encourage people to take action and change.

In this fashion, we have strengthened our engagement, and now our efforts are bearing their first fruits, which are visible in our democracy and the improvements achieved in women's situation within our societies. The local plan for equal opportunities in the province of Chancis and the ordinance for the use of inclusive language in Santa Rosa, Sicuani and Checacupe are examples of progress that encourage our journey.

I would personally like to express my sincere gratitude to Mission 21 and to Bread for All, who helped me begin this journey and empowered me to continue struggling for equality.

### Testimonials

1. We all have important events in life, and for us, this is one of them. After our participation in the ISAIAS meetings, we realized that the exclusion and marginalization of women is a reality (...). These findings led us to the first step in making changes within our families and then within the public sphere. *Association for the Dignity and Rights of Women (Adidemu)*
2. During this time, we have enjoyed these educational possibilities (...). They provide an essential foundation that allows our personal transformation and the beginning of social transformation. This exercise has enabled us to deal with our own weaknesses, internal conflicts and even inconsistencies. But we are convinced that this process is part of the challenge of building a more equal, fraternal and inclusive society. *Women's Network of Canchis*

3. Our reality, the lessons learned and the courageous testimonies of our members gave us the confidence to act so that change can take place. The political and public spheres are strategic venues for this purpose. Therefore, in the electoral process of 2014, we created spaces for political advocacy by encouraging the role of civil society and promoted the rotation and parity of female and male candidates. As a result, four movements and parties adopted the principle of parity and alternation on electoral lists. Afterwards, they signed a governance agreement at the provincial and regional levels. Then we said, «Yes, it is possible».

We do not want to conclude this testimony without expressing our gratitude to the South Andean Institute for Solidary Research and Action and to our friend and companion on the journey, Etel Nina. We are also thankful for the educational opportunities, the dynamic support, the affection that expresses a humanized practice beyond the mere transmission of knowledge and the possibility of developing new forms of relations between women and other actors.

*Association for the Dignity and Rights of Women*



# We Raise Our Voices for Justice

Miriam Glass



Halim Pratama, Marey Sundaraj, Obertina Modesta Johanis (Photo Mission 21)

The Women's Conference was a highlight of the journey to Basel, said Obertina Johanis, a pastor from Bandung, Indonesia. As a delegate from her country, Johanis attended the Synod, the highest decision-making body of Mission 21.

Before the Synod, the International Women's Conference was held on June 7. Numerous participants exchanged their views on gender equality and after intensive consulting in which all attendants took part, they adopted a common declaration.

The declaration includes 10 points, and its goal is to reduce gender inequalities and work towards a fairer world.

## Addressing Urgent Problems

At the beginning of the conference, representatives from Africa, Latin America and Asia described the most urgent problems on their continents. Among other things, Obertina Johanis mentioned human trafficking and violence against women and children. Suzan Mark from Nigeria listed discrimination against women anchored in society as the biggest challenge, which has to be addressed by means of education and economic support. Ebed Grijalva Yauri from Peru regar-

ded femicide (the murder of women because of their gender) and poor representation of women in politics as urgent issues.

The declaration is a useful tool to address all of these concerns as one. Representatives of the Women's Conference will present the declaration to the World Council of Churches in Geneva.

The Women's Conference ended with the launch of the «I walk with» campaign. This solidarity campaign supports the important work of select «agents of change», including Suzan Mark from Nigeria. All participants wore an «I walk with» T-shirt as a visible expression of solidarity with Mark. Afterwards, they went as a group to the Mission 21 gardens, where some tried to balance on a tightrope between two trees. A challenge that made the lesson clear: It's better together!

(Renate Bühler)

## Mission 21: Declaration for Gender Equality

We are determined to tackle persisting gender inequalities and to actively promote a just society; therefore: We, Mission 21 and its global partners, Gravely concerned about the existing inequalities between women and men in this world, having assembled, in a spirit of trust and cooperation, at the high-level segment of the fourth Women's Conference of Mission 21 on future priorities and urgent action to counter issues of concern to women in Latin America, Africa, Asia and Europe, and mindful of the important lessons learned from the experience of women working with the aim of achieving results,

1. Reform Christianity by abandoning androcentrism and reaffirm our commitment as Christian faith-based organizations to expand and accelerate efforts to promote gender equality;
2. Acknowledge that in spite of the advances reached, there are still important inequalities between women and men in the exercise of their rights; including the protection of their sexual and reproductive rights;
3. Deeply concerned about women's lack of representation and partaking in politics and in decision-making processes;
4. Recognize that, while women bear the brunt of conflicts, including rapes and killings, they are largely excluded from conflict prevention, peace negotiation, and peace building processes;
5. Gravely concerned that malnutrition and hunger situation caused by conflicts and climate change, as well as the HIV/AIDS epidemic through its devastating scale and impact, constitute an emergency and are among the toughest challenges to human life and dignity, as well as to effective exercise of human rights,

6. Noting with serious concern the neglect of the large global displacement of people caused by conflict and crisis, including the high numbers of displaced women and children;
7. Calling attention to the urgency of countering human trafficking in all its forms;
8. Bearing in mind that those who are in vulnerable situations are most endangered to abuse and exploitation;
9. Fully aware that femicide/violent death of women associated with gender, are problems of increasing magnitude, as well as the «normalization» of violence against women;
10. Acknowledge that in particular for women from marginalized ethnic, religious, social and economic groups suffer inequalities in all stages of life, that the different forms and expressions of violence preclude their individual development, undermine their rights and freedoms, prevent full development of their capacities and physical autonomy; and limit public, economic, social and political participation, in our societies;

Do hereby agree to jointly work for the exercise of human rights for the attainment of women's full autonomy, including their capacity to protect themselves from gender-based violence and their participation and contribution as agents of development and democracy; as well as taking action for our sisters in need; while regularly providing each other with updates on progress.

We pledge to be agents of change, to overcome gender inequalities and to thrive towards a world with gender justice.

Basel 7th of June 2017



# Tools for Reflection and Transformation

## Using the CBS Methodology for a Transforming and Inclusive Mission



Advocacy-Workshop 2017 (Photo Dorothee Adrian)

An excerpt from «Who is not at the table? Women's perspectives of holistic mission as mutually inclusive» by Fulata L. Moyo

The Contextual Bible Study (CBS) was developed by Sarojini Nadar, a senior lecturer of Biblical Studies and coordinator of the Gender, Religion and Theology Department at the School of Religion, Philosophy and Classics at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa, as well as an active member of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians. This methodology is a brainchild of liberation theology and a community-based process of awareness-raising, sometimes using biblical texts that are difficult to approach but can lead to transformation. It is an interactive study in which the context of the reader and the context of the Bible are put into a dialogue guided by the questions asked by the facilitator to raise awareness for transformation on a specific issue of concern within the community that has requested such a process.

The five Cs expressing the keywords that characterize CBS are: interactive – Community; context of the reader – Context (Social Location); context of the Bible – Criticality; for raising awareness – Conscientization; transformation – Change. To ensure that the process of praxis for transformation takes place, the final questions always call for participants to develop an action plan. The questions are usually: What will you do now in response to this Bible study? Are there available resources for what you want to do?

### How Do We Design a CBS?

Contextual Bible Study is designed along traditional hermeneutical principles. Hermeneutics is made up of two parts:

1. Exegesis: Understanding the text in its own context.
  2. Interpretation: Understanding the text in our own context.
- There are two types of questions:

1. Exegetical >> Literary or critical consciousness questions – draws on tools from biblical studies.
2. Interpretive >> Community consciousness questions – draws on feelings, experiences and resources from the community.

Dr. Sarojini Nadar was one of the founding members of the Tamar Campaign Against Violence Against Women and Children, a campaign at the Ujamaa Centre that is based on the story from II Samuel 13:1-22. For more information, including detailed notes about CBS, visit the Ujamaa website: <http://ujamaa.ukzn.ac.za/>.

# Tools for Reflection and Transformation

## Advocacy for Women's Human Rights

Meret Jobin and Sibylle Dirren

Mission 21's advocacy program has entered its second round. After having launched the program last year, another public event was held in Basel in 2017. On June 28, Hilary Gbedemah, a lawyer and member of the CEDAW Advisory Board, spoke about the significance of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) for women in conflict and post-conflict situations. Then, Yamtikarya Joseph Mshelia, Ruth Ketsia Wangkai and Doris Muñoz discussed how contextual theology can be used as a tool for advocacy work.

Raising awareness among church leaders and turning discrimination based on gender or sexual orientation into a talking point are key issues, according to Ruth Ketsia Wangkai, president of the Association of Theologically Trained Women in Indonesia (PERUATI). Doris Muñoz, coordinator of the theology and gender equality area at the Diego de Medellín Ecumenical Centre in Chile, pointed out that influencing churches on women issues is a major challenge. In Latin America, it is often difficult to break the silence and talk about violence against women, such as femicide, the murder of women because of their gender.

Yamtikarya Joseph Mshelia from Nigeria also emphasized churches' responsibility to encourage women and entrust them with leadership roles. She stressed the fact that she lives in a patriarchal society where many rules were made without the involvement of women. She would like to encourage women to be more self-confident and break with cultural and traditional roles in the education of their children.

All three women agreed that a feminist reading of the Bible could enhance progress towards greater gender equality. Furthermore, building and strengthening networks as well as training were important elements for empowering women and enabling them to claim their rights at different social levels.



Hilary Gbedemah, Expertin CEDAW (Photo Dorothee Adrian)

The UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) is the most important international convention for women's rights and is therefore often called the Convention for Women's Rights. It presents a broad definition of discrimination in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil and all other areas. Moreover, the convention, which has so far been signed by 189 countries, contains an agenda for a National Plan of Action to eradicate existing forms of discrimination. The convention is legally binding for the signatories, who have the obligation to incorporate gender equality into their national legislation. This means that they ought to eliminate discriminating laws as well as guarantee effective protection for women from discrimination. Therefore, they must take measures and create suitable institutions to this end.

### Training of Trainers: Advocacy and Contextual Theology

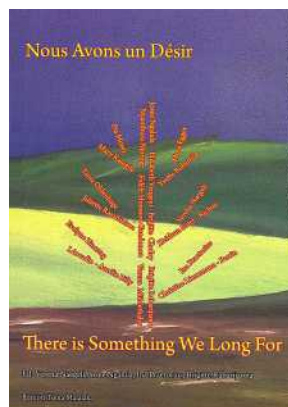
Seventeen female activists and theologians came together in Basel between June 28 and July 1 to exchange views on advocacy strategies and to learn about new tools. As disseminators, they will pass on what they have learned in their countries of origin. The theologian Ute Seibert and the theology student Rahel Weber led the workshop. This year, as in previous years, the experiences and knowledge shared by participants from Nigeria, South Sudan, Cameroon, Tanzania, Indonesia, Malaysia, Chile, Peru and Costa Rica provided the focal point. They



discussed the challenges they face in everyday life and the strategies they have developed. What unites them all is their common goal: gender equality.

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

For the second time, women from Mission 21 partner churches and organizations attended this advocacy workshop in Geneva, which is carried out in collaboration with other faith-based organizations. Nearly 50 participants from Asia, Africa, Latin America and Europe came together July 4-7. They discussed social, cultural and religious norms/guidelines that hinder the implementation of the rights established in the Convention for Women's Rights and exchanged views on possible plans of action. Visiting the United Nations during a summer session of the CEDAW committee was the highlight of the four-day training.



#### **Award for a Book by Feminist Theologians**

The Marga Bührig Award for 2017 goes to Verena Naegeli, Josée Ngalula, Ina Praetorius and Brigitte Rabarijaona. The bilingual collection «Nous avons un désir»/«There is something we long for» is honored because it reflects an exciting, well-crafted intercultural dialogue. The theologians strive

for an exchange with each other about what they wish for and hope for the world, their churches, theology and how they imagine the future. Drawing inspiration from biblical texts, they search for ways to deal with contradictions, differences and threats. The book has impressed the jury both in its theological vitality and its methodical sensitivity. It was created within the framework of Tsena Malalaka, an exchange forum for theologians from Africa and Europe. Across countries, continents and denominations, the theologians share a rich exchange on what moves them.

For more information, visit: [www.marga-buehrig.ch/foerderpreis/aktuelle-preisverleihung/](http://www.marga-buehrig.ch/foerderpreis/aktuelle-preisverleihung/)



Participants of the Advocacy Workshop 2017 (Photo Dorothee Adrian)

# Info-Platform

## Shadow Report to the UN Committee on Migrant Workers, Indonesia

Vistamika Wangka

The UN Committee on Migrant Workers (CMW) was scheduled to review Indonesia's initial report regarding the implementation of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families (ICRMW) on September 5-6, 2017. Since the convention's ratification in 2012, this was the first time that the Indonesian government had submitted the report. Migrant Care, one of the non-governmental organizations that addresses migrant workers' issues, took the initiative to conduct a two-day workshop where civil society organizations (CSOs) and other institutions—including Communion of Churches in Indonesia (CCI, Persekutuan Gereja-gereja di Indonesia)—were invited to work on the shadow report.

As a result, the CSO report was submitted to UN CMW on August 14 and followed by a press conference in Jakarta prior to the UN CMW session. CSO delegations in Geneva took part in the 27th Session, including informal meetings with the Committee.

Attending this workshop reminded me of the exposition in the UN last year, when I was invited by Mission 21 to participate in the Advocacy for Women's Rights training in Geneva. On this occasion, we learned about UN mechanism, treaties, international instruments, etc. Hopefully, whatever agreement we achieve, migrant workers and their families will benefit!

## Strategies for Political Advocacy in Latin America: Workshops and Virtual Education

Meeting in Lima, Peru

The workshop «Towards a strategy for political advocacy on gender justice for the partner organizations of Mission 21 in Latin America» took place on September 7-10, in Lima, Peru. Eighteen partner organizations of Mission 21 were represented in this event that kicked off the development of a strategic line of political advocacy on gender justice for the Latin American Program of 2018-2021. The workshop gathered 26 participants (16 women and 10 men) from Peru, Bolivia, Chile, Costa Rica, Argentina, Germany and Switzerland and was also attended by Claudia Bandixen, Director of Mission 21, Josefina Hurtado, Head of the Women and Gender Desk, and Hansueli Meier, Program Officer for Latin America.

According to Meier «... this meeting was a very enriching space and it is worthwhile to keep it. It has been seen that we have enough potential to promote joint work and to make the most of these synergies. An important theme within this space is good living. Regarding that subject, a workshop focused

on agriculture will be held next year in Bolivia. That meeting will be also an opportunity to evaluate the progress made in gender justice issues». (Extract from the workshop's report by Cecilia Castillo N.)

## Distance Learning Courses on Feminist Theology and Self-care Techniques

The project Weaving Networks in Latin America offers two online courses. The training course on tools and techniques of self-care and mutual-care from the Continental Women's Network of Mission 21 seeks to generate processes of emotional healing and enhance the comprehensive health of women engaged with their communities and social organizations by promoting self-care practices in a collective sense. These tools will be shared on a virtual platform after gaining experience through the workshops planned in southern Chile for the women affected by the consequences of the earthquake and tsunami in 2010 and the forest fires in 2016.



## Order Form

I am interested in receiving the Women's Letter.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

First Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

Country \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_

Comment \_\_\_\_\_

Please return to: Mission 21, Jolanda Urfer  
Missionsstrasse 21  
Postfach 270  
CH-4009 Basel  
E-Mail: jolanda.urfer@mission-21.org