

Reader English

City talk: Gender issues and network worldwide



Women from Africa, Asia, Latin America and Europe talk about power, resistance, courage and visions for gender justice worldwide.



14.00 – 15.00

Part 1: LIVING: Structures of violence. How we get in. How we find a way out

In this hour we will explore the topic of violence. Gender-based violence that affects women all over the world. In different contexts, in different ways, for different reasons and yet with comparable effects and causes.

Using the example of the beginning of the women's movement in Switzerland and the first women's refuge in Zurich, a real story of a woman from Bolivia and how she came to a women's refuge in Switzerland, as well as an insight into the situation in Indonesia and women's refuges there, a historical and global perspective becomes visible: we hear about experiences of violence and structures of violence, about how people can get into violent structures and how they find their way out.

Musical Entr'actes

Patty Lardi: Strength – Love – Passion



Patricia Lardi-Bonilla brings colours from the continent of Latin America to life. Facing the difficult lives of women who experience violence, she sets a powerful, encouraging counterpoint that is expressed in her music.

Patty Lardi-Bonilla was born in Lima and grew up in Peru with her twin sister. She discovered her great love of music, especially Creole music, at an early age. She took guitar lessons and sang as a soloist in the Creole music group "El carbon y sus amigos".

In 1983 she moved to Switzerland, where she paused her musical career for a few years in favour of her family.

Now, however, she is living out her passion for music again. She gives numerous concerts, teaches Latin American music and is often a guest on radio and television programmes.

Her music is defined by Italian and Spanish temperament. A first result is her CD "Note Incantate" with Italian and Spanish songs. She has not only been heard on radio and television, but also on the Piazza Grande in Locarno, in Lugano or Milan.

But her home country Peru also often comes up, for example with the dance group "Tusuy" under the artistic direction of José Campos.

Singing means life for her: When singing brings joy to others, it gives life meaning and strength.

 **The Rose**
Bette Midler

Some say love it is a river / That drowns the tender reed.
Some say love it is a razor / That leaves your soul to bleed.
Some say love it is a hunger / An endless, aching need
I say love it is a flower, / And you it's only seed.

It's the heart afraid of breaking / That never learns to dance
It's the dream afraid of waking / That never takes the chance
It's the one who won't be taken, / Who cannot seem to give
And the soul afraid of dying / That never learns to live.

When the night has been too lonely / And the road has been too long.
And you think that love is only / For the lucky and the strong.
Just remember in the winter / Far beneath the bitter snow
Lies the seed that with the sun's love, / In the spring, becomes the rose.

Marcus Caduff: a greeting from the Government Council of Canton Grisons



The President of the Cantonal Council, **Marcus Caduff**, is the head of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs in the Canton of Grisons. His concerns are attractive living and working conditions for all. His desire for "togetherness" for a strong economy, for sustainable and innovative agriculture and the compatibility of work and family life includes gender justice. We are looking forward to his greeting at an event where we want to open our eyes for gender justice locally, in Switzerland and worldwide.

Narrative spaces

Christina Caprez: Wann, wenn nicht jetzt (When, if not now)



Christina Caprez is a sociologist, historian and long-time editor at Radio SRF 2 Kultur, now a freelance journalist, moderator and author.

Her view of history is connected to the topics of family, migration, religion, gender issues and sexuality. Her research led to a book about the diversity of families in Switzerland *"Familienbande. 15 Portraits"*.

She became known through her book and the exhibition "The Illegal Pastor", in which she retells the extraordinary story of the emancipation of her grandmother, the first full-time female pastor in Switzerland.

Her most recent book is about the moving history of the women's shelter in Zurich.

In the mid-1970s, for the first time, violence against women became a public issue in Switzerland.

In 1979, autonomous feminists opened the first women's refuge in Zurich. A lot has happened since then: Women's refuges have been built all over Switzerland, since 1992 marital rape has been a crime, and since 2007 the motto "if you hit, you leave" is valid.

The book "When, if not now" tells the story of the fight against violence on women and children in Switzerland using the Zurich Women's Refuge (now the Zurich Violetta Women's Refuge) as an example. The book shows the strategies with which the activists and their partners succeeded in defending the women's refuge for more than four decades against political and social resistance, and draws a line from its origins in the autonomous women's movement to the development of feminist social work and the Istanbul Convention.

Christina Caprez reads parts of 2 chapters of her book «Wann, wenn nicht jetzt»

You'll find the translation below.



Song Lyrics, translation: *Salir corriendo (Run away)*

Amaral, aus dem Album *Estrella de mar* (2002)

No one can hold all the water in the sea / In a crystal glass.
How many drops do you have to drop / Till you see the tide rise?
How many times has he made you smile? / This is no way to live.
How many tears can you keep / In your crystal glass?

If you're afraid, if you're in pain
You've got to scream and run, run away.

How many blows do the waves give / Throughout the day on the rocks?
How many fishes do you have to catch
To make a desert out of the bottom of the sea?
How many times has he shut you up? / How long do you think you'll hold on?
How many tears will you keep / In your crystal glass?

If you're afraid, if you're in pain
You've got to scream and run, run away.

Christina Caprez: The women's movement discovers a new topic (p. 14-17)

The 1970s were electrifying years for women in Europe - in Paris and Berlin as well as in Zurich. Autonomous women's groups were formed in many cities. Women recognized that they shared supposedly individual everyday experiences, that their experiences therefore had to have social roots. "The private is political" was a central recognition in the movement. It was about one's own body, abortion, pornography, sexuality. Lesbians organized themselves. The feminists criticized not only the patriarchal structures of society, but also the machismo of the left comrades (*Machismo der linken Genossen*), who saw the oppression of women only as a secondary contradiction. At the same time, they set themselves apart from the generation of mothers who had fought for women's suffrage with - from the daughters' perspective - well-behaved methods such as petitions. (...)

The awareness of being part of an international movement fueled the feminists. In March 1976, a delegation from Zurich traveled to Brussels to attend the International Women's Tribunal, which was attended by over 2000 women from 40 countries. Inspired by war crimes tribunals, they collected testimonies of all forms of violence they experienced in everyday life: from rape and violence in marriage to pornography and sexism in advertising to discrimination in education and the workplace. Among them was Jeanne DuBois, a 25-year-old lawyer from Zurich.

Jeanne DuBois: *In the run-up to the tribunal, we collected money at an art auction in the Volkshaus for the travel of poor women. The meeting was huge, there were countless working groups, the women helped each other with ad hoc translations. The atmosphere was great. I was particularly impressed by a report from the founders of the first women's refuge (Frauenhaus) in London.*

In 1972, the first women's refuge in Europe was opened in London, and in 1976, feminists in Berlin and Köln opened the first women's refuges - places of refuge for women who had experienced violence in their marriages. Their reports on their experiences were available in books in the Zurich women's bookstore, where Annemarie Leiser, also a member of the FBB and a social worker in an independent kindergarten, came across them. She was shocked by what she read and began to talk to friends about violence against women. At a dinner at the women's center (Frauenzentrum) in November 1976, Leiser asked the group who would like to look into the topic more closely and found open ears among the women at the table - including Lisbeth Sippel, a future social worker, and Jeanne DuBois, a lawyer, who had not let go of the topic since her trip to Brussels.

Annemarie Leiser: *On the notice board at the women's center, where there were already a hundred other notes, we put up a note with the information that we wanted to found a working group on the subject of violence against women. The first meeting was attended by about twenty women. (...)*

The commitment to the issue of violence against women gave fresh drive to the movement. It was new, it concerned a social taboo, and it offered the opportunity to combine fundamental social criticism - of the institution of marriage, of the power relations between men and women - with a very concrete project - the founding of a women's refuge. Beaten women, as they were called in the language of the time, were considered the most obvious proof of the patriarchal violence that all women experienced on a daily basis. The meetings of the working group were chaotic at the beginning. There was neither an agenda nor a management of the meeting nor a protocol. Women drank a lot of wine and smoked. The journalist Marianne Pletscher, who sympathized with the women's movement and was planning a television film on the subject, attended one of the first meetings.

Marianne Pletscher: *At that time, it was quite a spontaneous group. The meetings were endless, and I had the feeling that there was a lot of talking around the issue. The term "professional" was almost a dirty word. I was not sure if they would ever get a women's refuge up and running. But I was wrong about that. Of all things, those women managed to bring the most efficient project of the women's movement to existence - and in a short period of time ...*



Song Lyrics, translation: *La Puerta Violeta (The Purple Door)*

María de los Ángeles Rozalén Ortuño (1986) known as Rozalén is a Spanish singer, composer and guitarist. © Universal Music Publishing Group

A sad girl in the mirror looks at me cautiously / and does not want to speak.
There's a gray monster in the kitchen / that breaks everything,
that doesn't stop screaming.
I have a hand on the throat / that subtly prevents me from breathing.
A blindfold covers my eyes. / I can smell the fear and it's coming.
I have a knot in the strings that dirty my voice when I sing.
I have a guilt that squeezes me.
It sits on my shoulders, and I find it hard to walk.

But I drew a purple door on the wall.

And when I entered, I freed myself.
Like to unfurl a ship's sail.
I woke up in a green meadow far away from here.
I ran, I screamed, I laughed.
I know what I don't want. / Now I am safe.

A flower that withers.
A tree that does not grow because it is not its place.
A punishment imposed on me.
A verse that crosses me out and annuls me.
I have the whole body chained. / Cracked hands.
A thousand wrinkles on the skin.
Ghosts speak behind the neck.
The wound reopens and bleeds
There's a goldfinch in my throat that flies hard.
I have the need to turn the key and not look back.

So, I drew a purple door on the wall.

And when I entered, I freed myself

...

Domestic violence can happen to all women, of all nationalities, of all social affiliations. Multiple challenges have to be faced by women who have been granted residence in Switzerland as a family immigration and therefore may lose their residence status in case of separation. One example:

Christina Caprez: «If I had separated, I would have been deported» (p. 165-171)

I am from Bolivia from a very poor family. My mother went to work in the USA and left us with my grandmother and stepfather. We were six siblings, five sisters and one brother, he is my twin. The stepfather was a drug addict. When he was using drugs, he would beat me and my twin brother because we were not

his children. Sometimes he threw us out of the house, and we slept on the street. I was the oldest, I had to wash, iron, clean, cook, and I was always tired. I hoped that one day a man would come and tell me, "I love you, come with me."

In fact, this man showed up, Enrique. He lived in Switzerland and came to Bolivia to visit his mother. I met him at a birthday party (...). Later he looked for me at home and told me: "I like you. I love you. I would like to take you with me to Switzerland." (...)

I was walking on air and I thought: I never had a thing of my own before, and now I have such a groom. I moved in with him in Switzerland. But already at the wedding reception (...) he beat me. (...)

I think he married me because he wanted a maid and children. When he drank, he beat me. I cried a lot. I endured the violence and said to myself: apparently that's life. (...)

I like to do sports. Once I met a Bolivian woman who took me to play volleyball. So I started to play there. In the shower, a teammate saw me and asked how I got these bruises. I answered, "I fell down." She: "No, what happened? Tell me." She insisted until I told her that my husband was drinking and then slapped me. The teammate told me, "Aymara, this is not normal here in Switzerland. (...) Here we have laws to protect you and a place to help women." (...)

In the women's refuge I got my own room. It was a nice clean house. I felt so good. They were all very nice women. We read books, chatted with each other, and felt like family. One of the staff members was also from Bolivia. I talked with her a lot. At the women's refuge, they asked me if I could cook. They gave me a card so I could go to Migros and buy what I needed to cook. That made me happy. I loved to cook for everyone: Ceviche, rice with chicken - all Bolivian specialties. (...)

I knew that my husband's family was very influential, and I was convinced that I would be deported back to Bolivia, because I had only been in Switzerland for two and a half years at that time. I had endured the beatings for that long. In fact, the judge decided that I had to go back to my country because I had only been married for a short time, had no children, and did not speak German. I told the lawyer my whole history, including my childhood in Bolivia. She told me, "Go back to your husband. He has to sign a paper that if he beats you again, they will turn him away. You're still two and a half years away, and then you can get a divorce and stay here." I thought, but what if he beats me again? At the same time, I said to myself, "Returning to Bolivia would be a humiliation. My stepfather will beat me again, my twin brother wants to kill me for running away. Who will reach out to me there? I said to myself: Aymara, be strong! So, I went back to him.

In fact, he didn't beat me anymore. But he made my life a living hell. I, however, did everything he wanted. When he pointed to a white sheet and claimed it was black, I agreed. One Friday he told me, "Put on some water for the spaghetti, I'm going to Migros to get some groceries."

Then he locked me up and didn't come back until Monday. I had nothing to eat and waited for him. (...)

So the months passed. I counted the days until the day when I would get rid of him. When the five years were up, I went to my lawyer to get a divorce. He was shocked. I stayed in the apartment, he moved out. Finally I was free.



Song Lyrics, translation: Como la cigarra (Like the cicada)

María Elena Walsh (1930-2011) was an Argentine poet, novelist, musician, playwright, writer and composer, mainly known for her songs and books for children.

So many times they killed me.
So many times I died.
Yet I am here, resurrecting.
Thanks I give to my misfortune.
And to the hand with a dagger
because it killed me so badly.

**And I kept singing,
Singing in the sun like the cicada.
After a year underground
like a survivor
who comes back from the war.**

So many times they erased me,
so often I could disappear.
I went to my own funeral
alone and crying.
I tied a knot in the handkerchief
But I forgot later.
That was not the only time.

**And I kept singing
Singing in the sun like the cicada**

...

So many times they killed you.
You will resurrect many times!
So many nights you will spend
Desperate
At the hour of the shipwreck
and of the one in the dark.
Someone will rescue you
to go singing.

**And I kept singing
Singing in the sun like the cicada ...**

Ira Imelda: Addressing violence at its roots



Ira Imelda is pastor of Pasundan Christian Church who in charge as a director of the Pasundan-Durebang Women's Crisis Centre in Bandung, Indonesia.

She is also one of the women's delegates to the Mission Synod.

Pasundan Durebang Women's Crisis Center is a shelter and service center that provides counseling, housing, protection and education for women who have been victims of domestic violence or have reached an impasse in labour migration in Hong Kong and need a temporary place to stay when they return to Indonesia.

In Indonesia, violence against women is not uncommon. Domestic violence represents 68% of reported acts of violence in Indonesia. The causes are diverse and include culturally grown attitudes, patriarchal structures and the average low level of education of women.

In such a context, women are particularly vulnerable because they are often subordinate to their husbands, both socially and civilly, as the husband is seen as the head of the family with far-reaching powers of control and authority. Under Indonesian law up to the month of April of this year 2022, the person who left the family home first had so far been declared guilty, and this discriminated against women who wanted to leave their husbands with their children after experiencing domestic violence.

Traditional cultural norms still lead to the marriage of underage girls in Indonesia, which can be seen as a structural form of violence. The pandemic has exacerbated the problem of domestic violence. Since the beginning of the pandemic, three times as many forced marriages have taken place. Many of those affected have so far kept quiet about the acts because there were no possibilities to accuse the perpetrator.

As an effort to improve their economic situation, many Indonesians seek work abroad, while others are pressured by their families to become migrant workers to support their families back home. Quite a few become victims of human traffickers. Their passports are usually taken away by the placement agency. More than 9 million Indonesians work abroad, 75 per cent of them are women. The lack of education puts especially female migrant workers in a precarious situation. Only a few of them know their rights and can seek help or take legal action in case of problems related to abusive employers. This is also the case in the economic metropolis of Hong Kong. Around 380,000 foreign domestic workers work here, mostly under very poor conditions, around 154,000 of them are from Indonesia.

After years of deliberation, the parliament in Indonesia passed a forward-looking law on 12 April 2022 to protect women and combat sexual violence. For Indonesia, this is a big step into the future. Because now both physical and non-physical violence will be treated as a criminal offence in the future. The same applies to sexual harassment online, forced contraception, forced sterilisation, forced marriage and sexual slavery. The perpetrators face high compensation payments and up to 15 years in prison.

Ira Imelda is involved in providing trained personnel in pastoral care, counselling and support for victims of domestic violence and human trafficking. The goal is to overcome sexual and gender-based violence. Women's shelters and counselling centers are important in this process, but for her it is crucial that the structures of violence are addressed at the root.

An example of this is the embedding of the Pasundan Durebang Women's Crisis Centre in an interfaith network of institutions such as the cooperation with churches and institutions like Christian Action in Hong Kong, the participation in the preparation of a shadow report on the situation of women in Indonesia for the attention of the UN or an interfaith advocacy platform founded in 2020 to address the issue of women's human rights with an interfaith approach.

Footnotes by Ira Imelda: Facts on Violence in Indonesia

Ira Imelda refers to the National Commission on Violence Against Women "Komnas Perempuan" (<http://mampu.bappenas.go.id/en>) for the facts. This is a national human rights organisation that works to stop all forms of violence against women in Indonesia and to make it a punishable offence.

According to this National Commission on Violence Against Women, the number of cases of gender-based violence against women in 2021 was 338,496.

Most cases reported directly to Komnas Perempuan continued to occur in the area of **domestic violence** (2,527 cases), and violence in the public sphere is also high (1,273 cases; 38 cases in the state-public sphere).

In the domestic sphere, **the number of assaults in partnerships is particularly high**, especially against girlfriends and ex-girlfriends, almost as high against spouses (about one third of all cases each), the other violent offences are directed against other relatives such as daughters-in-law, sisters-in-law and cousins or against domestic workers.

Forms of violence in the domestic environment are very often of a psychological nature (44%), in 20% also physical, but they can also include economic dependency (11%).

What is counted under violence in the public sphere? For example, violence in the cyber world (875 cases, 69%) or violence in the workplace (108 cases, 8%), violence in public places (76 cases, 6%) or violence in education as well as cases of human trafficking in labour migration or violence in medical institutions; the latter are counted at about 1% each.

In both areas - domestic and public violence - the reporting of assaults has increased compared to 2020; in the public area, in the public sector, this corresponds to an increase of 80%.

The situation is similar for domestic violence. The pandemic situation probably had an influence, but possibly also the increasing removal of taboos.

The extreme form of violence against women is femicide, the killing of women and girls because of their gender. Unfortunately, the number of victims here is consistently high: based on mass media reporting, Komnas Perempuan counted 237 cases in 2021. Victims of femicide are mostly wives (34 persons), girlfriends (persons) or neighbours (18 persons); domestic employees or prostitutes are also at risk. **The most frequent motives for a femicide are revenge for the ending of a relationship or rejection of a relationship (30.4%), previous rape (14.9%) or jealousy (14.3%).** Unwanted pregnancy, refusal of sexual intercourse, rejected urge to marry and rejected love or refusal of reconciliation can also lead to a killing.



Durebang-Center, Fotos: Mission 21.



Song Lyrics, translation: Canción Sin Miedo (Snog without Fear)

Vivir Quintana (1985) is a Mexican singer and composer. Her "song without fear" "Canción sin miedo" became an anthem against femicide.

The state shall tremble, even the skies, the streets.
The judges shall tremble and the judicial.
Today women shall take away our calm.
They have sown fear in us, we have become wings.

Every minute of every week.
They steal friends from us, they kill us sisters.
They destroy their bodies, they disappear.
Don't forget their names, please, Mr. President.

**For all the companions marching in the city of Reform
For all the girls fighting in Sonora
For the female commanders fighting for Chiapas
For all the mothers searching in Tijuana**

We sing without fear, we ask for justice.
We scream for every missing woman.
Let it resound loudly "we want each other alive!"
Let with power the femicide fall.

I burn everything, I break everything
If one day some guy turns off your eyes.
Nothing silences me anymore, this is all enough for me.
If they touch one, we all respond.

I'm Claudia, I'm Esther and I'm Teresa.
I'm Ingrid, I'm Fabiola and I'm Valeria.
I'm the girl you've broken down by force.
I am the mother who now cries for her dead.
And I'm the one that will make you pay the bills
Justice, justice, justice!

For all the companions marching in Reform
For all the girls fighting in Sonora
For the female commanders fighting for Chiapas
For all the mothers searching in Tijuana

We sing without fear, we ask for justice
We scream for each missing
Let it resound loudly "we want each other alive!"
Let with power the femicide fall.

And shall tremble all the capitals on earth
To the roaring roar of love.
And tremble the centres of the earth
To the roaring roar of love.



Gender-based violence is also a widespread and structural problem in all Latin American countries. Mission 21's partner project Flora Tristan in Peru also works to combat violence against environmental and human rights activists, domestic, sexualised and gender-based violence against women, children and members of the LGBTIQ community.

Ira Imelda will read poetry in her Indonesian mother language

Strong women

by: Hartoyo Andangjaya

The women who carry baskets in the early morning
Where are they from?
To the train station they come from the village hills
Before the morning train whistle wakes up
Before the day starts at the work party
The women carrying baskets in the carriage
Where are they?
On steel wheels they ride
They race with the sun to the city gates
Seize life in the city markets
The women who carry baskets in the early morning
Who are they?
They are mothers with steely heart
Mighty women
The roots that creep from the hills down to the city
They are love that moves to support village after village

Fire Tears

By: Zely Ariane

in the legs and armpits of the 'husband'
in the arms of our children
no, not anymore
tears must be fire, in the organization, in our minds and souls
in our act of responsibility, in the revolution
we are not the first to fight nature
and when we dare,
then we are not the last
certain
Thus,
We wipe the grains, footsteps gallop, our eyeballs are shiny, ready
the courage of our first steps, the basic humanity of our souls, the compassion
of our passion,
confidence raised us, the sharpness of our learning outcomes,
win our work hope
so that all humans can understand and feel love, equally. isn't that glorious?
when it comes to this point, the struggle will feel good to be wrestled,
until every crime of human life is the sun that ripens our conscience
agh,
the drops of water are now the patter of fire, women of the revolution



15.30 – 16.30

Part 2: HEALING: Finding peace. How we forgive. How we overcome.

In the second hour, we listen to how people seek ways out of violence they have experienced and out of structures of violence.

In the women's shelter in Graubünden, in refugee villages in South Sudan, in church communities in rural Latin America. Finding peace, overcoming, starting anew - these are processes that take time and energy. Practical, creative, proven and patient sources of strength become visible in the words and between the lines

Musical Entr'actes

Marianne van Wijnkoop und Elisabeth Hoppe Miro Guerero

The two musicians set moments of hope and musical sources of strength with cello and piano.

The Ave Maria by Franz Schubert reminds us of the power of prayer as well as of a strong and venerated woman and saint. The legend of August Nölck evokes the longing of romanticism. Daniel Hellbach as a composer of lessons combines in the ostinato Manolo's Song what has to be practised with patience with lightness and motivation. And last but not least, the two musicians with cello and piano throw hope "like birds to the sky" in El cant dels ocells by Pablo Pau Casals.



*A girl in South Sudan draws
a bird of peace next to bullet holes
Foto: Mission 21*

Franz Schubert (1797-1828), Ave Maria

August Nölck (1862-1928), Legende aus 10
Originalstücke for cello and piano

Daniel Hellbach (*1958), Ostinato Manolo's
Song

Pablo Pau Casals (1852-1908), El cant dels
ocells. The Song of the Birds. Catalan
Christmas Carol

Narrative spaces

Annemarie Grünig: Violence can happen to any woman



Domestic violence has many faces. It ranges from belittling and insulting to locking up, beating, stalking and coercion.

Annemarie Grünig gives a gentle insight into the work of a women's shelter: here, women and their children and female adolescents of all nationalities who are affected by domestic violence find shelter and protection, care and counselling.

One is to escape violence. Another is to deal with and overcome the humiliation and injury experienced. How do women find their way back to a self-confident and self-determined life? What do they need to do this? What hinders them? What needs to change in society? Can we speak of healing, reconciliation and overcoming experienced violence? And if so, what does it mean, what does it not mean? Questions for the team of a women's shelter and which strategies and principles they use to support and accompany the process towards a new beginning.

Translation guide (Original language German)

Violence is an everyday occurrence for many women in Switzerland. The scene of the crime: usually the woman's own home; the perpetrator: her former or current partner. However, it is not only the beating or raping man who is violent. The majority of the women interviewed stated that they had been subjected to psychological violence, which can range from being intimidated or aggressively shouted at, to threats and humiliation, to psychological terror. The children are practically always witnesses to the violence against the mother. Often they are also used by the father as an additional means of pressure.

Before a woman turns to the police, a doctor or directly to a women's shelter for help, she has usually already made many attempts to change her situation.

Often the short time in the women's shelter is not enough to rebuild the whole life. A separation usually entails a whole host of problems. Finding a place to live, sometimes matrimonial proceedings, arranging visitation rights, criminal proceedings against the ex-partner, fighting for a residence permit. These are Herculean tasks, even for linguistically skilled, well-integrated and psychologically stable women.

However, most women come from a different cultural background and are socially isolated, either by their husband or his family. According to statistics, Swiss women experience domestic violence just as often, but they are better connected. They find shelter with acquaintances, in a hotel or use outpatient services. They are therefore less likely to flee to a women's shelter.

The average length of stay in the women's shelter increases. During their stay, the women settle their separation from their violent partner and look for their own flat. There are many women who want to settle their affairs as quickly as possible. They have been through hell and have taken the first step forward by going to the women's shelter.

Things move forward and upwards, and if the women stay, the staff of the women's shelter help them. To support the women, we offer counselling and support services that can help them to come to terms with the violence they have experienced and to develop new perspectives on.

Many questions have to be clarified quickly, often concerning how the woman can support herself without her husband: How can the woman claim maintenance? Can she apply for social assistance? How does she apply for custody of the children? While the mothers are advised in social, financial, legal and medical matters, the children can play in the women's shelter and are supervised during the day if necessary and possible. The staff of the women's shelter are trained social workers and social pedagogues.

All women live independently in the women's shelter and remain responsible for themselves and their children. However, they are always part of a community of women and children who have experienced similar things. They have to cater for themselves in the communal kitchen, have to ensure cleanliness and order in the common rooms. The protected space offers them the opportunity to think about their future life plans without fear and to concentrate on what is important.

The women seeking shelter find a pleasant atmosphere here. It is always a special moment when we experience how the women become independent and can make their decisions free of any paternalism. When we see how they blossom and enjoy their new freedom without fear. How proud they are when they earn their own money. But it is also rewarding when we see how children - initially disturbed and with behavioural problems - blossom more and more and enjoy the violence-free time in the women's shelter with their mother.

What should victims bring with them to a women's shelter?

In addition to clothes and school supplies and toys for the children, all personal documents are very important. If possible, identity cards and passports - also for the children - residence and work permits, marriage and birth certificates, health insurance cards, necessary medication and vaccination certificates for the children should be brought along.

Paska Aciya Nimiriano Siya: Building peace in the midst of war



Paska Aciya Nimiriano Siya from South Sudan is reverend (a pastor) of the Presbyterian Church in South Sudan and active in working with women.

Peacebuilding is central to the current situation in South Sudan. The civil war has claimed up to 500,000 lives and some 4.2 million inhabitants have been displaced.

A peace agreement was signed in September 2018. The churches play an important role in bringing about reconciliation in the divided society.

How can this work?

Can trauma and reconciliation work succeed so that people can move on with what they have experienced without reacting with renewed violence?

Paska Aciya Nimiriano Siya has dedicated herself to peace work, especially with women, who are victims of violence in war contexts in a special way, but who also have an active role in reconciliation work in a special way.

The war in South Sudan has deep consequences: for example, for the school system. Around 73 percent of the population cannot currently read or write. This makes rebuilding the country and securing income difficult.

Mission 21 supports Presbyterian Churches in South Sudan PCOSS especially in empowering women and girls, as they tend to be more vulnerable but develop very strong resources when given the opportunity to develop them. Even more important for girls and women are safe spaces: where they can comfort and encourage each other and, over time, talk about trauma and go a process of overcoming.

In addition to the war traumas that have not yet healed, many women are doubly burdened. Currently, about 50% of women in South Sudan are married before they reach majority. Overall, it is estimated that over 80% of women have already experienced gender-based violence. This ranges from denial of independent access to resources - such as education, employment to be financially independent and to health care, including contraception -, to psychological pressure, sexual harassment and rape, to being married off as children or against their own will.

Women in South Sudan are trying to bring about change by providing a safe environment for exchange and counselling to leave violent structures behind. This also includes education about their own rights, support for a profession outside home and thus the generation of an independent income.



Graduate of a midwifery school in South Sudan

In a situation of war trauma, schools for children as well as for adults mean much more than access to education: they provide security, give daily structure and a normalization of everyday life and living. Schools are "safe havens" in this context: a protection from being drafted into war again (as child soldiers) and a safe space to recover with psychological and psychosomatic support.

Paska Aciya Nimiriano Siya: An urgent appeal

My dear brothers and sisters, we must leave this world a better place for others. What are we doing for the coming generations, something that will make them proud and celebrate us for generations? We are not getting any younger and this world never will be what we want it to be without us taking immediate action.

The reason why America and Chinese are competing is not that they would live forever, they are doing it for the following generations.

Do we want our following generations to learn killing and corruption or love and hard work?

There are people who have left the world almost in ruins. They have killed thousands of people to secure political seats. They have left a disturbing image amidst of us people and nobody wants to remember them for what they have done but the impact and the lives they have claimed continue to remind us of how wicked they had been.

I think by their dead some people must have danced to celebrate their death and wished they should go through everlasting fire for what they had done on earth. This is a life reminder that nobody becomes good for pouring people blood. Unless the whole world becomes mad. When we think of Hitler, Osama Bin Laden, Pol Pot.

Though they were known political figures, you will never take pride in them or wish to be like them because their actions have poured blood on millions of people in the world. But difficult and sad is it to accept the fact that our world seems hopeless and humanity in fear of their lives from those who are going in to use them to cling to power or maintain one.

Even as I speak now, millions of people are hungry, and thousands more are going to starve to death because they avoid of going out to dig in their gardens because of the fear of being killed and of coronavirus. Thousands of children are out of schools with many of them homeless because those who used to take care of them (parents) got killed during the war and all those who should have contributed to their development and to the development of the country have run to seek refuge in neighbouring countries.

Paska Aciya Nimirano Siya: The deep wound of a social trauma

Trauma is an emotional response to terrible events like an accident, raping or natural disaster.

Trauma is the result from series of events that are emotionally disturbing or life threatening with lasting adverse effects on the individuals functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional and/ or spiritual well-being.

South Sudan has undergone painful deep wounds in the hearts and minds of the people who have experienced a chronic trauma. They felt powerless and could not handle or help others. When somebody's life was threatened or physically severely injured or when people faced a serious risk of being hurt or killed. This is involving war, rape, torture, murder, abduction, loss of relatives and homeland, domestic violence, loss of livelihood. South Sudan has been in this situation for two decades of generations who have only learned war. South Sudan has undergone many years of war and misery. This is one of the longest wars in Africa. Nobody seems to have a solution or should I say methods and techniques to solve the South Sudanese' problem. No one can tell how much problem the South Sudanese people carried on their shoulders.

Although several Sudanese leaders claimed to solve other people problems' they never knew that their own problem is heavier than their necks can carry. How can you try to help somebody to carry his 500 kilos of pressure if you have yourself already 1000 kilos of pressure on your own neck that presses your head down- and you cannot leave your own aside. Therefore, thousands still find themselves up rooted and living in refugee camps in the neighbouring countries of Uganda, Kenya, Ethiopia, Soudan and all with traumatic experiences.

My work with women and children tries to reduce trauma in South Sudan and the refugee camps where South Sudanese reside. By educating and empowering women, but also male and youth leaders, with knowledge of Trauma Healing. To learn about its causes, symptoms, effects and of course preventive measures. I regard it as my mission as a pastor (reverend) to heal the wounded dignity of people to restore new life.

What can be done?

We give the victims of trauma and domestic violence a VOICE.

We listen to their stories and try to understand their fears.

We try to heal the wounded dignity of people by the healing of memories – restore the happy memories and let go the difficult memories.

Freeing hearts and minds by a process of forgiving and bringing reconciliation.

How We Can Help Traumatized girls and all children?



Parents, Pastors, Teachers try to reunite the children with their caregivers or get them into a new loving home.

We listen to their pain with our ears, eyes and hearts.

We encourage them to verbalize their feelings. And to share with us their burdens, problems, hope and dreams for future.

There are many ways to do this.

Some ways are to let them sing, dance, draw, cook, write poetry and stories and build models with clay as a way of expression.

We restore places of security and daily life as: going to school, singing in choirs, playing with friends and pals, to use the power within praying or to participate in Sunday school ... to do everything trying to feel a normal life by doing things at the normal or usual time.



Children's Centre of the Presbyterian Church in South Sudan.

We also work with Bible passages in trauma healing

For example, the Gospel according to Matthew 18:1-5.

At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" And he called unto him a little child, and set him before them. And Jesus said: "Verily I say unto you: Unless you become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. So he who occupies the lowly position of this child in society is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever receives such a child in my name receives me. No one is too low or too small to be loved.

Or, for example, the Gospel of Matthew 11:28-30.

Come unto me, all ye that are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take the yoke (burden) upon you, as I have done, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Ruth Vindas Benavides: Biblical texts as back-up



Ruth Vindas Benavides is a pastor and educator. She completed her studies at the Faculty of Theology of the Universidad Bíblica Latinoamericana (UBL) in Costa Rica.

She also has a diploma in "Nurture with Tenderness". She specialises in pedagogy and Christian teaching in catechesis and adult education.

She is an ordained pastor of the Baptist Church of Costa Rica and has worked for several years in the Baptist Association on the development of Christian teaching materials.

She enjoys working with young people and women and leads workshops with them.

Ruth Vindas Benavides currently works as a teacher at the UBL in San José. In addition to her teaching, she leads the Department of Parish Pastoral Care, where she provides emotional and spiritual support to students in times of crisis. Ruth is currently studying for a Master in Human Rights and Peace Education.

What is the role of churches in preventing violence and dealing with violence where it happens? Does Christian education and imprinting reinforce taboos with regard to gender-based violence or, on the contrary, can it contribute to addressing and questioning structures of violence and empowering those affected? Are biblical texts a hindrance to self-confident women because they are shaped by patriarchal history, or do they have a revolutionary power with which women can fight for equality? How do women read and listen to biblical texts when they experience structures of violence? Ruth Vindas works a lot with women, bringing biblical texts into conversation with the context in which women live. An insight into Latin American and church women's networks.

Translation guide (Original language Spanish)

In Latin American and Caribbean countries, violence against women is an obstacle to all development, in a more general way, to the whole society, and this violence continues to grow.

Violence against women primarily affects the human rights of the affected women, which is reflected in their health, their economic opportunities and their general emotional and mental well-being. But the consequences of violence against women extend even far beyond the victims themselves, as violence threatens the stability, security and social well-being of families, and therefore their status in the community. This is, why it is so important to continue working on gender issues.

In this effort to reduce, or better prevent, violence against women and gender-based violence in general, the contribution that churches can make is fundamental. We know that throughout history and according to different social contexts, religion has always been linked to cultural ideas, including those of gender. This is because religion - or religions - are expressions of theological elaboration and thereby usually institutionalised theological elaboration.

On the other hand: religious experience can (and should) - according to the churches - be an exercise (or learning process) for human growth in all its dimensions. However, this can only be achieved if theological work develops a deep sense of the Good News, understanding "salvation" or "redemption" in an ethical sense and proclaiming it with an awareness of wholeness, justice and peace.

Against this, we face a great challenge in the present: Our reality in Latin America and the Caribbean is that we are confronted with the rise of so-called neo-Pentecostal fundamentalisms, whose religious attitudes are based on very conservative practices that I judge to be oppressive, and which combine with political systems that are equally oppressive, even violent, towards women and minority groups.

With increasing attention, the religious views and practices of these neo-Pentecostal movements promote the superiority of men and the subordination of women, with an impact on everyday life. Girls are educated, women are urged to respect the instructions of their church leaders who call themselves "apostles", often with a claim as if what they preach is the direct word of God. As a result, women submit unconditionally and the experienced gender-based and also structural violence against women persists and even becomes more widespread in the social dynamics.

Against this context, a healthy Christian education and theological formation of the grassroots plays a very important role with regard to gender-based violence. Above all, it is necessary to open spaces of biblical education for women. It is very important to teach them to read and study the biblical texts from their reality of life and experiences as women. From their perspective of the world and life as women, which is different from the perspective of men. These are different experiences and one should not exclude the other. Churches should be places where exclusion based on gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity or social class is overcome.

It is very important to create places where women can come together among themselves to develop their faith as a community that is equally inclusive and respectful of all, and to build that capacity to rise above.

There are two keys to accessing biblical texts from a feminist perspective.

1. The Gender Key

This key is very useful for the critical analysis of a biblical story and is a crucial tool for feminist biblical interpretation. It brings to light the relationships that are structured in the Bible. This leads to new interpretations that are oriented towards new relationships.

It helps us to discover the subjective realities of people such as: their history, culture, particularities, skin colour, ethnicity, gender, age, social status.

This key makes it possible to uncover all the features of domination both in the biblical texts and in today's reality: Domination by one gender over another, by one group over another, by one social class over another.

Reading the Bible from this perspective makes it possible to recover women in alternative roles and as in the Bible and to avoid reading it as a story of male and patriarchal action. In order to reconstruct the text from a gender-based perspective, it is important to engage with patriarchy in its various manifestations. The questions we face from the new keys we contribute to the interpretation lead us to more favourable conclusions seen from a gender perspective.

Concretely: We try to discover the biblical women as acting subjects

1. What differences and relationships between men and women become visible?
2. Where do women become visible? Where do they remain invisible?
3. Where do female values (or values represented by women) become visible?
4. Which gender-based stereotypes become visible?

When women are in a subordinate role, we try to put ourselves in their place and ask ourselves: How might they feel? What would they say? What would they do? One's own imagination plays a very important role in this.

Questions for Bible reading at home

1. Is there a presence or absence of women in the text we are studying?
2. If there is an absence, how do we interpret it? Why are they silent? Who provokes or enforces this silence?
3. What relationships between men and women are reflected?
4. What biblical texts can contradict or complete those in which women do not appear?
5. What would women of that time do or say in the text we are studying?
6. What is the role of women and how important are they?
7. Is there solidarity or lack of solidarity among women? What patriarchal structures lead to a lack of solidarity among women?

2. The Symbolic key

A symbol expresses human experiences that cannot be explained in words. I assume that there is a deeply human reality that is inherent in every human being, is part of their spiritual context and gives them the possibility to see and represent reality in a certain way and to respond to it in their own unique way.

Women's experiences are often closer to the processes of life, and this brings new ways of seeing the world and God. Many women live with symbols that have different manifestations such as community, well, earth, womb, seal, food, pleasure, home, spirituality... which when discovered and decoded in each culture, and also in the biblical times, allow us to rediscover and appreciate our own identity. It is important to rediscover the dimensions of biblical symbols and their theological meanings in order to bring them out from within ourselves. The symbol helps to discover all the richness of the text and the social community behind the texts.

The following questions can deepen our understanding of symbols.

1. What symbols are significant in this text: places, times, circumstances, objects, contrasts - especially in relation to women?
2. What are the meanings of these symbols in the biblical context / today?
3. Which "feminine" images have a significant place in the text?
4. What "masculine" images obscure the presence and actions of women?
5. What socio-cultural images create discrimination?



A concrete example of how a biblical text can be read with a feminist vision.

Mary and Martha (Gospel of Luke 10:38-42)

38 And it came to pass, as Jesus was going on his way, he came into a village; and a woman named Martha received him into her house. 39 And she had a sister named Mary, who sat down at Jesus' feet and listened to him. 40 And Martha cared for many things, and came and said to Jesus, Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me alone to serve you? Tell her to help me. 41 Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art anxious and troubled about many things. 42 But one thing alone is needful; and Mary hath chosen well, that shall not be taken from her.

Better understanding if you have the written context in mind: What happens before in Luke 9:51 - 10:37? Jesus travels to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. On this journey there are several surprises: (Luke 9. 58ff)

First surprise: the Samaritans refuse to welcome Jesus because he is on his way to Jerusalem (socio-cultural and religious stereotypes).

Second surprise: the controversy about following Jesus. While one makes himself available and Jesus rejects him, others refuse Jesus' calls because they have more important things to do (false ideas of discipleship).

Third surprise: the opening of the kingdom of God to the common people. The things God wants to reveal to the least and smallest (God's choice falls on the simple and small).

Fourth surprise: The story of the Samaritan - the question was not "Who is my neighbour?" but "To whom am I a neighbour?" (The established is turned upside down.)

Discover surprises: The text has some surprises in store!

First surprise: a bold woman

Jesus enters the village and is stopped on his way by a woman who invites him into her house. Martha crosses all the rules of behaviour established by society and cultural ethics. She leaves her allotted space (the house) and enters forbidden space (the street). There she dares to speak to a male rabbi, which was not allowed. We see something else with Martha, namely that she did what the Samaritans would not do before: She welcomes Jesus.

But although Martha dares to do certain things as a woman in a patriarchal society, she does not completely detach herself from the social and cultural guidelines. She then assumes her role as hostess and servant. Having dared to invite Jesus into her home, she now becomes the one who retreats to her most intimate space (the kitchen). In this space, away from the male guests, she would be well regarded according to the ethical patterns of judgement in force.

In this enclosed space of the kitchen, we read a woman who still allows herself to be enslaved by legalities and discrimination. The kitchen is the space from which Martha looks at the other woman with annoyance, anger and discontent. Why does Martha feel and think this way when she herself has invited Jesus into her home? What is Martha really resisting? What is Martha's real complaint?

Second surprise: a subversive woman

Mary, unlike Martha, chooses a different option. In Mary we see several things. First, she has a very clear idea of what it means for her to follow Jesus. To do this, she must leave behind everything that binds her to society. Mary shows herself to be a woman with clear and precise convictions.

Moreover, Maria acts subversively by taking on a role that society would never assign her, that of a teacher's pupil. This was something women were not allowed to do, they were not educated, their responsibility was in the home, not in school. But Maria rebels against this oppressive system and makes her own choices based on her own expectations, desires, dreams and aspirations. Why is there a difference between how Maria feels and thinks and how her sister Martha thinks? What drives them both to make their decisions? We find in Martha and Mary a controversy about what it means to follow Jesus. Each has a different vision. Martha's vision is to respect social rules. Mary's vision is to follow the freedom that she visions when she meets Jesus.

Third surprise: Maria claims a free decision

Martha makes a righteous demand of Jesus according to the norms: "Don't you care that my sister has left me alone to serve?" According to the socio-cultural norms, this was the right thing for Martha to do. According to this pattern, Martha is right - but it also means perpetuating the oppression and making women invisible by seeing them only in their spaces, only as housewives; from a feminist perspective: as forced into service by systems of oppression.

But Jesus' visit is the decisive moment in Mary's life. Against the whole system of her time, against the guests who are in her house, against the annoyance of her sister, Jesus opens the doors to the freedom of the Kingdom of God: the freedom to be able to decide for herself, not on the basis of what society imposes on her; the freedom to find herself, to see herself as a woman who is able to learn, who is able to break through structures of violence and oppressive social patterns. Mary becomes an agent for the kingdom of God.

Fourth surprise: a man shows solidarity with women

Jesus' answer to Mary is also a door to freedom for Martha. Mary has already felt this freedom; freedom is what Jesus brings to the sisters' house. Mary understood this very well, and she would not let it be taken away from her. Mary understood that Jesus' message as a teacher was to show her, as well as others, the way to become a person with dignity, a woman free from social, cultural and religious stereotypes. Now that Mary has found this path and chosen what is good for her, it is not to be taken away from her. The same is an invitation for Martha.

What was important to Jesus? Like the wounded man on the road before, Mary and Martha's lives were victims of a patriarchal, oppressive, violent, abusive, discriminatory society. For Jesus, it was not the food prepared by Martha that was important, but the liberation of the two women. "Are you not interested in my situation?" Martha asks Jesus. Jesus' answer is, "Yes I do, I care, that's exactly why I'm not going to take away Mary's blessing of freedom." Here we see Jesus as the one who becomes the women's neighbour. There are two people who are oppressed by a social system, and Jesus shows solidarity with them.

Some questions for discovering new freedom for yourself - to be answered in peace with music, during the break or later for at home:

What do you think of Martha's attitude?

Why do you think she complained to Jesus when he was her guest?

How do you think Martha feels about Jesus' response?

Do you think Martha is right to complain to Jesus? Why?

If you were Martha, what would you have done?

Why do you think Mary took this attitude?

What do you think Jesus' response meant to Mary?

How do you think the other people at the table reacted to Jesus' answer?

If you were Mary, what freedoms would you want and what things would you be willing to change?

What situations in your life resemble those of Martha?

Which of your actions most resemble those of Mary?

Footnotes: further Bible texts she often used

Galatians 3,28: No distinction is made here between men and women or between different social classes. Jesus opens spaces for women in: John 4,1-42 (The Samaritan woman), Luke 13,10-17 (Jesus heals a crippled woman on the Sabbath), Mark: 5,21-43 (The bleeding woman). Proverbs 31:10-31 can be read with a liberating vision; so can the story of Leah in Genesis 30 or of Tamar in Genesis 38, so can the story of the daughters of Zelophehad in Numbers 27:1-11.



17.00 – 18.00

Part 3: SHARING: Power. How to get it. How to answer for it.

Musical Entr'actes

Margritta Juon and Walter Stenz: Music as a source of strength



At the organ: **Margritta Juon**

For Margritta Juon, music often expresses more than words. Her interest in organ music was awakened at a very early age because she often played next to the organ bench when her mother played the organ.

Her music teacher Werner Tiepner taught her not only how to play the organ but also liturgical knowledge.

She kept her focus on church music: studies in Zurich with Ursula Hause and in St. Gallen with Stephan Thomas shaped her path as an organist. Today, her musical focus lies in the liturgical

area of the Thusis-Masein pastoral community and in the Fürstenwald cemetery chapel. She enjoys playing music with others, in a wide variety of musical styles. For her, music is a source of strength.



With the flute: **Walter Stenz**

Even if Walter Stenz, as a pupil, carelessly used his flute as a goal-line at the football match after the flute lesson - music became his personal essence of life and brought him friendships all over the world. Music still inspires him today in the personal and interpersonal area. It conveys something deeper than words are able to do. He makes music as a gift across all borders.

Narrative spaces

Eva Soledad Alejo Mamani: Frauenpower in der Landwirtschaft



Elva Soledad Alejo Mamani is Executive Secretary of the Latin American Executive Council (CELA), representative of the Latin American Continental Assembly (ACLA) and represents the Latin American partner organisations of Mission 21 at the Synod in Davos. She is the first woman to hold this position and responsibility.

She is an agricultural engineer by profession and works as a consultant for environmental projects in the city of La Paz.

Until the end of 2021, she was Executive Director of the Fundapim Foundation, a partner organisation of Mission 21 in Latin America.

Her work has included and continues to include the management of forestry programmes, irrigation projects, agricultural censuses and the empowerment of producers in rural areas. She also leads a movement to create a network of seed guardians in Bolivia. Leadership roles in agriculture and engineering: with this, responsibility is borne in a domain where men have tended to make a career, while women have done a lot of grassroots work.

How do women gain responsibility, how do they get into positions of responsibility and how do they handle power responsibly? How do women gain respect - from men as well as women - and recognition in leadership positions, especially when the people to lead are predominantly male?

Elva Soledad Alejo Mamani tells how she asserts herself as a woman in her profession. She talks about her everyday life and her work to promote gender and intergenerational equality in the rural areas where she works. She talks about what encouraged her and still gives her strength today. Working with indigenous farming families is very important to her and, from her point of view, very rewarding and fruitful, both professionally and spiritually.

Translation guide (Original language Spanish)

If I try to describe an overall picture, the context in which I have reached a high position as a female engineer, there are a few factors that I have experienced again and again and that I would like to highlight.

First of all, as a female agricultural engineer responsible in the areas of water supply, forestry, agriculture and environment, I have a lot to do with technicians: who are all men, young men mostly.

It is easier for construction companies to hire men because they do not "cause" problems when they are on construction sites, in other words: they are not harassed in the workplace in the same way as women.

For me, this team composition was always a bit complicated, because to assert one's authority in such an environment, I had to show **character, courage and perseverance**. It seems difficult for men, especially young men, to take instructions from a woman. I experienced this at the beginning and felt the frustration of the technicians because I was the only female supervisor in most of my tasks.

Looking back: how did I manage? At least I didn't give up and kept talking myself into it. That was probably the most important thing it took. I looked for ways to show real strength myself. I tried to gain respect through good organisation. Also by being willing to listen to my staff at all times. I have tried to distribute tasks equally and to let the men participate in decisions. I have tried to avoid making the men feel inferior because they are below me in the hierarchy.

The macho culture is still deeply rooted in Bolivian structures. But it is important to take up this challenge and make people aware that knowledge and skills are not limited by gender or age. Over time, they ask you to actively train this change in thinking.

An important role in this rethinking is played by us women ourselves and especially by mothers:

I am grateful to my mother for making schooling and higher education possible for me. For encouraging me to stand up for my ideals, my thoughts and my strengths. I am grateful that I grew up in a home that at least tried not to make a distinction based on gender.

Men also play an important role in the change of thinking: I am grateful to all the male engineers who were tutors for me and recommended me for responsible tasks and posts and treated me the same as my male colleagues. I owe a lot to all those people - in this male domain to which my profession belongs, I owe it to men - who did not doubt my abilities "because I am only a woman", but encouraged me to fight through and not to give up, who made me understand that before you can become a "boss", you have to learn how to lead: Namely, by starting at the bottom and working your way up, and then **consciously going down again**, in order to come up a bit further afterwards.

Since I left university, I have not stopped working and continuously demonstrating my abilities. I am grateful to God for guiding me along paths where I did not

experience violence: neither harassment nor bullying nor any other form of violence that would have negatively affected my thinking or otherwise weakened me in any way and taken away my inner strength.

Over time, I have understood that as long as I do my work and demonstrate my skills, as long as I show respect to everyone and try to create equality between producers and technicians, whether women or men, then that - my attitude - is what is perceived and ultimately counts.

Each and every one of us is a traveller at some point in our lives: we are all at some point of transition or progression and also of farewell. If I have done a good job and succeeded in creating an environment of harmony, respect and equality, then I will be remembered for it. If I am recommended to other employers, it will be because I have demonstrated real ability in my job and because I have succeeded in creating an environment of equality and respect.

I count this as one of the conditions that make us equal: Respect, kindness, fraternity and harmony: and for me this means becoming able to listen to each other and respect the thoughts and ideas of my counterpart - this improves the results of the workers as well as my success as a leader of the whole team.

As women, we are often limited (still more than men), but let's not allow limitations we perceive, fear or actually experience to gain power over us and dominate us. Let us take limitations as a challenge and make them our strength to improve the baseline. The working world is a huge monster where the highest positions are mostly held by men, or if a woman holds a high position, the gap in salary is a chasm, in many institutions worldwide, as unfortunately often enough a woman's work is not recognised as equal to that of a man.

A woman who believes in **social equality**, by which I mean that we all get the same opportunities, regardless of where we come from ...

a woman who believes in **political equality**, where her rights are respected regardless of gender, age or political conviction ...

a woman who believes in **economic equality**, where women's income is equal to that of men in the same positions.... such a woman already makes a difference.

It is precisely this faith that already makes a difference, that is revolutionary. Because a woman like that passes on her thoughts and her faith to future generations: It is we who teach our children - daughters and sons - to stand up for equality, to respect other people, and encourage them to stand up for their rights and the rights of others, regardless of age or gender.

Interview: Janine Schweizer



Janine Schweizer was elected on the board in 2020. She is responsible for the department of women and gender within the continental assembly of Europe. She is a pastor in the reformed church in Davos Platz.

During her studies at the Universities of Basel, Berne and Arusha (Tanzania) she worked as a record keeper, later as board assistant for the continental assembly of Europe and learnt a lot through the global relation network of Mission 21. These experiences were decisive for her motivation to deal with the topics of ecumenism, mission and development cooperation during her vicariate training to become an ordained minister in the Reformed Church.

Esther Gisler Fischer: Discover your own care biography



Esther Gisler Fischer is a feminist theologian and was a member of the expert commission on women and gender at Mission 21 for four and a half years. She currently works as a reformed pastor.

Her question is: How different could our world look if domestic and gainful employment, relationship, care and voluntary work were fairly divided between the sexes? And if resources were more fairly distributed between the countries of the South and the North? Would the question of power be posed differently in a different economy?

Economy is Care' was the motto of the 7th Swiss Women's* Synod, a process-oriented, church-related and ecumenical movement with roots in feminist theology: Esther Gisler Fischer was part of the steering committee. The economy is to be brought back to its core business, the satisfaction of actual human needs worldwide. Esther Gisler Fischer presents this concept and concludes with a discussion with all those present, based on her own life experiences.

You find a film on the concept at: <https://wirtschaft-ist-care.org/> and detailed informations at: https://www.cfd-ch.org/admin/data/files/editorial_as-set/file/445/210916_leporello_rz_d_online.pdf?lm=1632134051



Speech to welcome the women coordinators



by Barbara Hirsbrunner, Councillor of the Cantonal Church of the Grisons, President of the Synod Committee Davos

Dear Women's Coordinators from Asia, Latin America, Africa and Europe

Dear members of the Women and Gender Commission of Mission 21

Dear members of the Board of Mission 21

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ

The Cantonal Church of Grisons is honoured that you are all guests here with us in Chur today. May I also send you the best blessings of the Church Council of the Evangelical Reformed Church of the Grisons and thanks for your valuable work.

I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak to you today. I represent the hosting Cantonal Church as a Church Councillor with the Department of Ecumenism, Mission and Diaconia.

As I write this greeting to you in April, the world is holding its breath. Nothing is as it was before February 24, 2022. We are witnessing just how terrible the demonstration of power is in the cruel war in Ukraine, just a few hours' drive from us. As always, children and women are paying a multiple price and had to leave their husbands behind in the war.

And especially despite this situation, it is impressive to see how many talents and experiences come together at the Mission 21 women meetings at the synod. Especially women from difficult situations. I remember Suzan Mark, who is responsible for the women's work in the Church of the Brethren (EYN) in Nigeria. There, women traumatized by the terrible persecution of Boko Haram are regaining their courage and learning to live with self-confidence. I remember Josefina Hurtado, who told of the exploitation of housemaids in various Asian

countries. We in the ECA can learn from your experiences - the solidarity, the courage in extreme situations, the common prayer. Together we are strong. Strong in hope, strong in faith, strong in love.

As a church we are obliged to take responsibility.

We shall be the voice of the voiceless and hopeless. We shall stand up for justice and human dignity. We shall give hope to the world. We shall enable all people to live a wholesome life worth living.

As part of our project at Pentecost this year, we were able to promote and financially support in our 78 local congregations Mission 21's peace projects against violence on women and children in Indonesia and Malaysia.

Your voice is needed. Your voice as a woman is needed. Also needed is your knowledge and experience to see, to hear, to understand, to act. It needs your willingness to dialogue for constructive work. There is the need for sustainable bridges for a functioning, just and peaceful world. The world needs your courage to stand up and expose injustice. It needs your strength and perseverance in God's Spirit. It absolutely needs Mission 21.

So I hope that today you will experience many encouraging encounters, have fruitful discussions and in this way be empowered to carry out your mission in the field of gender justice.

«Living – Healing – Sharing- together for one world» I wish you all with all my heart

Bless your heart

Barbara Hirsbrunner



Welcome speech to the lunch guests



by Curdin Mark, *President of the Reformed Church of Chur*

Dear guests

As President, on behalf of the Reformed Church of Chur, I warmly welcome you here in Chur. It is a great honour for me as President of the congregation of Chur that you have chosen Chur as the host city for your international Synod and that you are holding your meeting here this afternoon on the important

topic of "gender justice".

Your concern to be able to live together in peace and justice worldwide is more important than ever. We all know structures that we have to describe as violent. The extent of this violence varies greatly and is often not immediately visible to outsiders. Especially when it is gender-specific violence.

It is important that we are all sensitised to recognise even hidden violence and to stop these spirals of ruin. «Dem Rad in die Speichen fallen», as Dietrich Bonhoeffer once said.

It is important to empower people affected by violence. To encourage them. To give them space to breathe and to create opportunities so they can find new ways. But it is equally important to work to break down these structures of violence and to create a new cooperation in their place.

I truly believe that we all have to commit ourselves to this vision. On a small scale as well as on a large scale. In our own families, at work, in our villages, in politics and business.

I therefore greatly appreciate your great work for a more peaceful world and support you wholeheartedly.

Let us seek, in united effort, to create a more peaceful world!

Since you are a guest in Chur, allow me to give you a few key facts about the place where you are staying: Chur is the capital of the tourist canton of Graubünden with a population of about 38,000. St. Martin's Church, where you are meeting this afternoon, is the largest church in the canton and was built in its present form in 1491. From 1523, St. Martin's Church was the centre and starting point of the Reformation in Graubünden.

The stained glass windows were installed in 1919 by the famous artist Augusto Giacometti.

I thank you for your visit and for your attention and hope that you will enjoy your stay in our Alpine town and that you will be able to hold a successful conference.

Einen guten Appetit!

Curdin Mark



"Living, healing, sharing - Together for our world" is the motto that the Council of Churches of Grisons has chosen for this week of Mission 21 Synod.

"Together for our world" is our commitment as the international community of Mission 21 to a life in dignity for all people. The bracelets woven from recycled PET plastic express: All life is connected and held together by Christ (the pearl).