

Concept of Gender: A Just Analytical Tool?

Introduction:

The United Nations World Conferences in Cairo, Copenhagen and Beijing have created important spaces for women to move the international development agenda from a narrow 'add women and stir' approach to placing gender relations and women's empowerment as critical and central to economic, social and political development. These conferences linked the local to the global and forced the global community to be aware of and ultimately be accountable to women who were previously considered as the targets and recipients than as subjects of development. The conference in Cairo helped to focus on the autonomy of the body, sexual and reproductive health as a basic right for all women. The conference in Copenhagen made visible the gender bias in economics and labor patterns and the growing role of women in economic production. The Fourth World Conference on Women at Beijing went to the heart of the problems of current macro and mal-development models and emphasized the need to drastically change the world's approach to progress.

'Gender mainstreaming' has taken center-stage in the world order. Women's movements in the 80's and 90's, have helped to identify that the concepts of women in development (WID) and women and development (WAD) have not adequately addressed the basic fabric of society, nor the attitudes, culture, tradition and theologies that shape the thinking, attitude and therefore the behavior of people, hampering all initiatives for a just society. At the same time, increasing marginalization of a large mass of people, acute polarization of north and south based on western economic yardstick have led to an increase in religious extremism and growth of right wing movements that are bent on taking regressive measures with regards to women in the hope that that would set the world order straight.

In these extremes of situation, gender could be used as a concept and as an analytical tool to enable one to understand the nature of two wrongs that affect the whole of humankind: Inequality and violence. Often the term 'gender' is used interchangeably with the term 'women' as it has become a more politically correct terminology to use, be it in the international or grass root organizations nowadays. Therefore, it is not only important to fully understand the concept but also to utilize the concept in the most appropriate way in our work.

Earlier, analysis of women's oppression has largely led to separatism in organizations or polarization between women and men. But gender as a tool for analysis encourages an understanding of women's subordination, oppression and exploitation that recognizes women and men in relation to each other in society. Gender analysis also involves the political, economic, social, cultural and religious context manifested in the institutions be it the government, family, community, society or the religious institutions which might perpetuate unequal gender relations due to gender insensitivity or gender blindness. Gender analysis offers to them not only to understand the disparities but scope for correcting them.

Concept of Gender:

Gender refers to the socio-cultural definition of man and woman, the way in which they are differentiated and assigned socially acceptable roles. These are maintained, sustained by multiple structures like family, community, society, ethnicity, and through tools like culture, language, education, media and religion. For ages we have been socialized into believing that

the different categories, roles and status accorded to men and women in society is determined by biology i.e. sex, that they are natural and constant and therefore not changeable. In a way, women and their bodies are held responsible for their specific roles and subsequently their subordinate status in society. When biological determinism has been accepted as natural, there is obviously no need to address the gender inequalities and injustice that exist in society. However, if biology alone determined our roles, every woman would be only cooking washing sewing etc.! But this clearly is not the case because most professional cooks, launderers and tailors happen to be men. The roles also change with time, culture, and region. Therefore, neither sex nor nature is responsible for the unjustifiable inequalities that exist between women and men. Like the inequalities that exist between classes and races, inequality between women and men are also created by historical constructs and therefore they can be questioned, challenged and changed. In short, Gender refers to

- The social differences between men and women
- Gender is a learned and enforced behavior
- Gender varies with culture
- Gender varies within culture
- Gender changes over time.

Background:

The French Feminist Simone de Beauvoir who is considered as a precursor of gender theories, had analyzed that biological determinism confines women to the sphere of reproductive and nurturing roles. She pointed out the difference between "natural and cultural sex" by saying that a "woman is not born but made" This later on became the basis for gender theories. Ann Oakley who was among the first few feminists to use this concept says, " Gender is a matter of culture, it refers to the social classification of men and women into masculine and feminine." "Male-ness and female-ness are not biological givens, but rather the result of a long historical process. In each historic epoch, male-ness and female-ness are differently defined, the definition depending on the principal mode of production in those epochs... Therefore, men women develop a qualitatively different relationship to their own bodies. Thus in matristic (matriarchal) societies, female-ness was interpreted as the social paradigm of all productivity, as the main active principle in the production of life. All women were defined as 'mothers'. But 'mothers' then had a different meaning. Under capitalistic conditions, all women are socially defined as housewives (all men as breadwinners) and motherhood has become part and parcel of this housewife-syndrome. The distinction between the earlier, matristic definition of female-ness and the modern one is that the latter has been emptied of all active, creative, productive (i.e. human) qualities."¹

Gender as an analytical tool can help clarify these elements of role differences, social relationships and the relationships of power in society, which undermines the value of those who are considered as less privileged; be it women, children or indigenous people.

Shaping and sustaining of Gender differences:

a. Through Socialization Process

When a child is born, it is not only classified by its biology but is also assigned a gender. The welcome of a new born child is different. There is a preference for males in some cultures

¹ Mies Maria. 1988 "Social Origins of Sexual Divisions of Labour" in Women: The Last Colony, op.cit., p73.

because of the connotation attached to the males as 'bread-winners', the ones who should inherit, control resources and properties. The girls are considered as a responsibility and liability. This is followed by the difference with which they are addressed, handled, treated, clothed, and socialized to be part of the society. They later internalize this 'gendering' or gender indoctrination. This process of socialization, according to Ruth Hartley is mainly through four processes namely manipulation, channelization, verbal appellation and activity exposure.

Manipulation is the way one handles a child. Boys are treated as strong autonomous beings and girls as pretty, cuddly beings right from the beginning in most cultures. These physical experiences of early childhood shape the self-perception of boys and girls.

Channelization involves directing the attention of male and female children to objects or aspects of objects such as Barbie dolls for girls, cars, and soccer balls for boys. In some countries, the girls get real babies (their brothers and sisters) to play mother to. Through this differential treatment, the interests of girls and boys are channelized differently and they in fact develop different capabilities, attitudes, aspirations and dreams.

Different Verbal appellations are used for boys and girls. We often tend to say to girls "How pretty you are!" and to boys "How strong you look!" Research show that such remarks construct and reinforce the self-identity of girls, boys, men and women.

Different activity exposure to traditional masculine and feminine activities reinforce the learning of masculine and feminine behavior that is internalized unconsciously. Social and economic sanctioning and ostracization help keep them into this sphere of behavior. For example, boys go fishing with their father or to watch games while girls are encouraged to help in household chores.

b. Adoption of the concept of Dualism in social construction.

Largely, the concept of dualism has helped to perpetuate subordination not only among women and men but also between south and north. Not only are the 'masculine' and the 'feminine' considered as opposites but also a hierarchy has been created between them. Mind, culture, reason, and public spheres are considered as masculine and under men's purview. Body, nature, emotion and private homes become the sphere of women. Mind is made superior to body, culture an improvement on and superior to nature. Men who are considered objective and rational are valued more highly than women who are considered subjective and emotional. Women are the bodies almost like nature that has to be subdued and owned. Men are the minds, thinking, rational, acting beings!

Not only do women belong to the underside of dualism but the indigenous and poor are also categorized as such. This is why the tribals, small peasants, fisher-folk, natives and the dalits, like women, are treated with disregard and end up as development refugees! At the global level, the countries of the 'South' are considered as body and those in the 'North' as the mind, the south as nature and north as culture; South as emotional, poor, dependant and backward and the north as rational, scientific, advanced and modern!

It is important to understand these connections between gender and other hierarchies of class, caste, first world and third world etc. "Three hundred years of witch-hunting, running parallel with the colonization of the world, were necessary to snatch from the women- as

from third world people-their power, their economy and their knowledge, and to socialize them into becoming what they are today: housewives and the 'underdeveloped'. The housewife-and with her the 'underdeveloped'- is an artificial product, resulting from unimaginably violent development, upon which our whole economy, law, state, science, art and politics, the family, the private property and all modern institutions have been built. The third world is the 'witch' of the witch-hunting days and is the 'general -housewife', the world -housewife today including the third world men. The relation between husband and wife is repeated in the relation between the first and the third world"²

Not only qualities and characteristics of people are gendered but also spaces. The stadium, pubs, cinema halls can become male spaces. Even within a home a quiet room, the study, the chair or some space might be reserved for men that is not disturbed by the others in the household. Women normally go to spaces assigned to men's, only when accompanied by men. Words and activities which are fine for 'respectable' men are not considered good enough for 'respectable' women. This way dualism has also created a double standard.

c. Role of Patriarchy as an ideology

Patriarchy is an ideology or a belief system according to which men are held superior and responsible for those under their care. Religious interpretations, practices and their institutionalized structures have played an important role in creating and perpetuating the patriarchal ideology and the justification for it in social behavior and socio-economic structures. Media and even some educational institutions continue to spread this ideology by showing men in strong decision making positions and women as voracious consumers, decorative pieces or as sex objects. Normally, the following areas of women's lives are under patriarchal control. Productivity and labor, reproduction, sexuality, mobility, economic resources, social and cultural spheres and at times even their way of dressing.

The patriarchal system is so well knit and entrenched that it is invincible. Moreover, it seems so natural that women themselves would perpetuate the system. Often, women are accused of working against other women themselves precisely because of this reason. A rural woman explained this phenomenon of women oppressing other women this way. "Men in our families are like the sun, they have a light of their own (they own resources, are mobile, have freedom to take decision, etc.) Women are like satellites, without any light of their own. They shine only if and when the sun's light touches them. This is why women have to constantly compete with each other for a bigger share of sunlight, because without this light there is no life."³

The male control over women does not necessarily mean that it leads to violence of all forms all the time under which women suffer. It could be so very subtle that it can almost become invisible and therefore invincible. That is called 'paternalistic dominance'. It has mutual obligations and therefore is not perceived as oppressive to women nor to men. It could be seen simply as allocation of duties between men and women which would offer stability to the family and orderliness in society and not seen as oppressive to women.

² Von Werlhof Claudia in "The Proletarian is Dead: Long live the Housewife" in "Women: the last Colony", New Delhi, Kali for women p 177.

³ Kamla Bhasin in Understanding Gender, Kali for Women, New Delhi, 2000, page23.

d. Religion as an identity giver and identity fixer

Religion plays a very important role as an identity giver and identity fixer. The interpretations of the texts in the hands of a few who have gained authority over religious structures have the opportunity to shape the thinking and behavior of the masses. Institutionalized religions have not favored women so much as it had men though feminist interpretations and theologizing have attempted to overcome these disparities. In spite of these corrective measures, we are not making headway because in addition to this shortcoming, we have two new merging trends. On the one hand there is an increase in extremism and right wing movements that want to prescribe stereotyped roles and behaviors for men and women as an outcome of a backlash against women's movements, On the other hand, religion based morality has no place in economics, science or technology in the current age. The market defies centuries of religious morality, which in principle at least exalted altruism, and selflessness while it condemned covetousness and greed. In the old times, commerce was tainted with dishonor and lending money at interest was denounced. The new market defies all these standards and proves that market can only be won by some at the price of others and there is no room for human affection, generosity or loyalty. Women are further marginalized first, because there is less space for them in the order of hierarchy, second because of the reestablishment of gender division of labor that confine them to the private and reproductive sphere and the third with less access to resources they cease to have any bargaining capacity in the market.

Reclaiming gender equality therefore becomes even more challenging for faith-based organizations like the LWF. Moreover, specifically the Christian tradition with its roots in the Hebrew and Greco-Roman worlds has been faulted as a prime source of the cultural practices, which have made women and nature inferior. It had also given way to triumphalistic colonization and subjugation of the more egalitarian indigenous communities, trivialization of their subsistent existence that was more nature friendly; erasure of their cultural diversities as paganism, their knowledge and wisdom as outdated.

The self understanding of Christians with no difference between Jews and Gentiles, slave and free, men and women as in Galatians 3:28 in the early church period had scope for leadership of women. "Indeed, women's leadership in the primitive church was exceptional not only by the standards of Judaism and the Greco-Roman world, but also by those of the later Christian Church"⁴ If that were so, how come the churches have turned out to be hierarchical and patriarchal? This question, among many similar ones needs to be answered to understand the current situation within the churches.

e. Exploitative Social and economic status of women

All of us have multiple identities given by our sex, religion, class, work marital status etc. Gender interacts with other identities, impacts and is impacted by social and economic factors as well as by ethnicity, race and age. In society, not all women are subordinate to all men. A rich woman because of her class or an executive because of her job is in a position of dominance over men who work under her. Similarly, the ruling class or the upper class or race may use their power for exploitation. Raping women is one of the means of exploitation. It is used as weapon to discipline the exploited class and in order to punish rebellious poor peasants or landless laborers who gather up courage to organize themselves to protest. Those

⁴ Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza, *Women Sprit Rising, Women in the Early Christian Movement*, Ed. By C. Christ and J. Plaskow.

who are in a status of power, beat up the men, destroy their properties and also rape their women. Because "women are seen as the only property that the pauperized men still possess. The rape of their women teaches poor men the lesson that their status is one of absolute powerlessness and propertylessness."⁵ Therefore, to protect the honor of men and the community and in order to maintain the purity of the race, many women are restricted in their mobility and way of dressing, given fewer opportunities for education and employment. Women who remain within the household, being dependent or in seclusion are considered as a symbol of social status in many patriarchal societies.

Like gender and gender relations, the gender division of labor is not the same everywhere. It is specific to culture, location and time. When the Taliban leadership took over in Afghanistan, the first instruction they issued is that men should wear skullcaps, grow beards while women should cover themselves, and remain indoors. "It is interesting to see a new political regime and the gender regime that comes into force and the way gender division of labor is reinforced. The sexual division of labor therefore is not a structure in its own right. It is part of a system of production, consumption and distribution which is structured by gender"⁶

f. Role differentiation and stereotyping

A division of labor built on one's sex allocates specific roles to women and men based on the ideas of what men and women should do or is capable of doing. Because of gender division of labor, men assume control over land, technology, credit, cash from the sale of produce etc. Normally women produce for subsistence and men for exchange or cash. And therefore, women's labor is not accounted for or valued.

Vast differences persist in higher education. The subjects that girls and boys study also reflect this disparity in the industrialized, capitalist countries. Between one to two thirds of the working women are all concentrated in the textile, clothing manufacture and food processing sectors or in jobs that are extensions of the nurturing roles like nursing, teaching, secretarial assistance etc. This proves that gender hierarchy cannot be removed by education or development alone, if no serious attempts are made to change patriarchal structures and attitudes.

g. Difference in Power Relationships

Different role allocation means different power relations also. People are assigned differing amounts of power, authority and control over other people, resources and decision-making. Therefore, gender relations not only influence the behavior between men and women but also between men and men themselves. One example is the bride's father and family is considered inferior to the bridegrooms' father and family in the Indian sub continent even if they have a better economic and social standing. Gender relations are therefore relations of dominance and subordination with elements of cooperation, force and violence sustaining them. Based on these inequalities, several social scientists see the family as a place of bargaining and contestation where power is negotiated. The Nobel Prize winning economist Amartya Sen

⁵ Mies Maria. 1988 "Class Struggles and Women's Struggles in Rural India in *Women: The Last Colony*, op.cit. p 138.

⁶ Kannabiran Vasantha 1996. *Sharing the Fish-Head: The Philosophy and Practice of Gender Training in South Asia*, New Delhi: ASPBAE/FAO NGO South Asia Program pages 36-37.

calls this "a co-operation and conflict model." Bina Agarwal, a feminist economist says that a rural person's bargaining power will depend on his/her fallback position, which in turn depends on five factors in particular.

- Private ownership and control over assets, especially arable land
- Access to employment and other income-earning means
- Access to communal resources such as village commons and forests
- Access to traditional and external social support systems
- Access to support from the state or from NGOs.

World over, many of these areas have been rather restricted to most of the women.

h. Low valuation of Women's productive and reproductive work

According to the UNDP Human Development report of 1995, the invisible and unpaid work contributed by women, annually is worth US \$11 trillions! Only 14% of women hold senior management positions (UNDP Human Development report of 1995) the ratio between women's salaries and men's salaries in the US continues to be 3:5 and this has not changed in the last one hundred years! Seventy percent of the world's poorest and illiterate people are women and children. Specifically, women's roles have multiplied in recent years in addition to their productive, reproductive and nurturing responsibilities. "Most policy makers and trade specialists assume that gender issues are irrelevant to the formulation of trade policies. But evidence demonstrates that trade liberalization has different impacts on women and men's employment and conditions of work and also consequences for women's unpaid labor."⁷ For example, trade expansion has increased women's labor force in export processing. But global restructuring of industries like the garments have increased subcontracting which reduce the status and rights of workers and increase in the number of 'sweat-shops.' There is an increase in home-based labor, which is paid by piece rate with little status and protection for the workers. In 1996-1997, the clothing and textile industries in South Africa lost close to 40,000 mainly female jobs when production facilities were relocated to neighboring states where wages were lower and trade unions weaker. Under valuation of women leads to social problems like prostitution, domestic violence, trafficking of women and girls.

i. Language: The medium that also becomes a message:

Language, to a large extent, not only is expressions of our thinking but also the medium that shapes our thinking. Often the use of masculine word is set as the standard. One example still valid would be the use of the term 'mankind' instead of 'humankind'. The vilest insults in any language refer to female parts or to female sexuality. Certain terms and roles in our languages are gender ascriptive (where gender is in built) like uncle-aunt, brother-sister, mother-father because they indicate the sex of the person. However, there are hosts of others that are not gender ascriptive, but it is assumed that they refer to a man or a woman. For example the jobs of secretary, nurse, kindergarten teacher are naturally assumed to refer to women whereas boss, pilot, manager, surgeon or farmer refer to men.

⁷ Mariamma Williams, Strategic Analysis for Gender Equity (SAGE), in Brief: Development and Gender July 1999. page 1.

Specifically in and through Churches, the language used for God shapes the thinking and life orientation not only of the corporate faith community but of the individual members also. "While officially it is rightly and consistently said that God is spirit and so beyond identification with either male or female sex, yet the daily language of preaching, worship, catechesis and instruction conveys a different message."⁸ The Images of God used by the church are mostly male: father, king, lord etc reinforces indirectly the male model of leadership.

Some approaches that need to be analyzed:

Many organizations focus on promoting the rights-based approach. Emphasis on Human Rights of individuals gives them a better bargaining point and a platform to negotiate. Though a number of countries have formulated formal rights, it has not been matched by an improvement in the quality of life of the majority. At the same time, there has been a global shift in the consensus over the role of the state in welfare provision. Public services have been down sized and reallocation of service delivery to commercial interests, charitable groups and NGOs. This development on the one hand emphasizes a participatory approach that gives voice to the marginalized and the poor in the process of development, planning and decision-making. "On the other hand a disabling macroeconomic environment makes the substantiation of rights difficult. As the state devolves responsibility for welfare delivery to non-state actors, there is a danger of even further reliance on women to perform low-paid or unpaid care work"⁹ Women who have been traditionally responsible for the well-being of their family have to pick up where the state leaves off.

The shift in the interest on the part of the NGOs to develop micro-economic policies that favor women's role in production is not only because of the dwindling of resources for development services but also because women are now considered as better performers and more credit worthy. This can accentuate gender division of labor because women make up a significant proportion of those engaged in income-generating activities that are unregulated. Their dependency on NGOs makes them to have a secondary societal position as recipients. So the question to ask is where are the rights of citizens and in what sense are women appearing as "right-bearers in the emerging models of social service delivery.

The Human Rights mechanisms put in place cannot deal with the stronger elements of religion, culture and tradition under which guise the key actors refuse to comply with human rights standards. It is left to the faith based organizations to come up with corrective measures, the reason why gender as an analytical tool assumes greater importance.

Gender analysis in any development agency is done mainly to understand the context of any project. "Women's lives are larger than the projects and they cannot be seen in fragments. Areas like religion, culture, sexuality, violence i.e. areas where patriarchy is strongest, are completely left out of these modules."¹⁰ These are problem areas that are considered as best left alone. This is a challenge to the faith-based organizations such as the LWF.

⁸ "She who is. The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse", by Elizabeth A. Johnson, New York 1992, p. 4/5.

⁹ From the report of the UN Research Institute for Social Development Workshop "Gender Justice, development and Rights: Sustaining Rights in a Disabling Environment" New York 3, June 2000.

¹⁰ Gender Trainings Endangered by Fragmented Thinking: A view from the South by Kamla Bhasin

Most gender packages that come from the North also ignore the whole question of power in gender relations. The issue is de-politicized with the excuse "we cannot interfere with the local culture" Therefore the effectiveness of them in societal transformation is limited. Investing in women is not enough. It has to combine with empowering them to challenge patriarchy at all levels.

Gender mainstreaming means political reorganization and policy processes because most often the existing structures do not allow for gender equality. They are either gender biased or gender blind. Gender mainstreaming should result in more equitable relations between women and men and between communities. Analysis of local socio-cultural, religious and political context is therefore a crucial pre-requisite. Culture and tradition could definitely be used to resist change. The need to distinguish ignorance from unwillingness is also important. This means, gender concept must start from our own organization.

Fears about gender mainstreaming:

Gender mainstreaming is feared as it is born out of research made by feminist analysts and by global women's activism. Therefore, it would be held as another women's attempt to claim for equality. Almost all the researchers are women and therefore the voice of men and their active involvement could be limited. The fear on the part of some women is that it might lead to integration and bureaucratization of women's movement and therefore lead to invisibility rather than to transformation. There is a fear that gender mainstreaming also might be an attempt to integrate women's work to cut down costs and to downsize staff. The critical voice of wise women, which is outside the structures, might go unheard. Expert knowledge, understanding, acumen, and strategy to discern when is the appropriate moment to put gender separately in the agenda for action and when to integrate it would be a balancing act.

High lights of Affirmative Measures taken in the LWF:

We could classify them in two ways. One, those that meet the practical needs of women and the other, that meets the strategic needs that would address and revise the existing policies and structures.

Some of the strategic resolutions and statements that have been adopted by the LWF Assemblies and Council are; 1. The vision - 'From a Federation to an Inclusive communion', 2. Policy to have 50% participation of women. 3. a) Promotion of economic literacy and creation of programs of investment and small scale credit accessible to women, b) allocation of a percentage of the global budget to programs and projects which aim to empower women, c) instill gender awareness and ensure that gender is taken seriously in all projects and to ensure that these projects are considered and approved by a gender balanced group, d) emphasis on funding from only those theological schools which provide equal access to theological education for both women and men, e) the affirmation to the commitment on women's ordination as an expression of the communion of all baptized in Christ giving witness to the gospel and f) the identification and articulation on Violence against women as a sin.

The LWF's "Guiding Principles For Sustainable Development" includes gender dimension as a general principle and emphasize the following;

- *The protection and promotion of the human rights of women are fundamental to the sustainability of development.*
- *Sustainable development processes require that the root causes of inequality between men and women are addressed and acted upon.*
- *Sustainable development requires gender equality and the full leadership of women in all development processes*
- *Improving the status of women requires the participation of both men and women; addressing gender issues must be the concern of all people not only women*
- *Sustainable development cannot be gender-neutral*
- *The participation and empowerment of women in present as well as future program is a means as well as a goal in the process of sustainable development*
- *All assessment, planning, monitoring and evaluation in development work requires a gender perspective and analysis which values the work and experience of women and*
- *Specific programs and projects for women will continue to need investment in order to ensure that women are fully involved in the development process.*

The document, "A Clear Plan of Action" of WICAS, adopted in the LWF Council Meeting in 1992, provides clear guidelines for the achievement of equality between men and women. It says, " Women's work in the LWF has been motivated by a vision of the church as an inclusive community. The story of Creation in which all people are created in God's image; the Lutheran theology of Baptism in which all the baptized are one in Christ; and the example of Jesus have served as a basis for establishing "women's full participation for a renewed community."¹¹ The practical needs of women are addressed by programs and projects of WICAS as well as by all the departments of the LWF. The recommendation that has come out of the Evaluatory Report on WICAS, DMD, has this to suggest;

"The mandate of WICAS should be amended to include a specific gender component, involving responsibility for the promotion and monitoring of gender awareness in all areas of the LWF's work and the work of member churches. 'Promotion' should include in-built procedures to ensure that WICAS is able to advise and consult all other LWF Desks, which should also be held accountable for working to specific procedures and policies concerning gender. The protection and extension of women's rights and freedoms must continue to be emphasized, but it must be backed-up with gender education and awareness"¹²

Examples of men's involvement in the promotion of gender issues

A clear identification has been made that gender concerns cannot be addressed to by women alone but should equally involve men actively. Some men around the world have already begun such solidarity work. For e.g. there is a network of Men against Violence in Sweden inspired by Eva Moberg and founded by a like-minded group of men and women in 1995. This has more than 3000 members as a result of which the Government of Sweden is also taking active and supportive interest in the matter. International exchanges, promotion of a Nordic-Baltic dialogue and in the Council of Europe has taken place. There are similar networks in the US and Canada as well.

¹¹ A Clear Plan of Action, Lutheran World Federation, Women in Church and Society, age 1,

¹² "The Unfolding Vision", an Evaluative report on the LWF/DMD Desk fir Women in Church and Society, 1998, page 40.

Another example is to initiate organizations as "Men for Women's Rights" called 'Padare' in Zimbabwe. It has established monthly discussion, reflection and action meetings in several centers around the country. These meetings bring together men who are willing to change the false image and role of men and committed to live and relate to women in a just and dignified manner. One of their articles says "Allowing prescribed roles and social expectations to govern male and female behavior, limits men's understanding of the issues and inhibits them from active involvement. Men should therefore welcome gender analysis as a tool that enables them to focus more on male behavior and attitudes and how these can change for the better. It is indeed possible for men to change. Taking more responsibility in ensuring that we respect and protect reproductive rights are possible for men. Most men who are prepared to stand up to the challenge and take an active role in working with women on issues of gender and reproductive rights for women find themselves overwhelmed by a sense of isolation. Patriarchal society often reminds them "men do not behave that way." We can overcome this sense of isolation in two ways as follows: 1. When individual men begin to initiate discussion particularly among other men on their frustrations of patriarchal expectations. One will be ridiculed here and there, Nevertheless, one will be surprised to discover that some men will want to be part of an initiative that is challenging a system that makes them behave like super human beings. 2. When two three or more men commit themselves to a men's discussion and action group around the issues of gender and women's reproductive rights. These issues are never meant to be for women alone. Men must move from excuses to action."¹³

Conclusion

There is vast scope for LWF to be further involved in transformation process as an international and faith based organization. Deconstructing the concept of patriarchy and the attendant dualism, androcentricism and hierarchy is a priority. An immediate move would be to encourage men's movement to question male concept of masculinity, the pressures on them and the violence it might lead to. A gender policy for the LWF Secretariat could be another step. Call for further affirmative expressions of solidarity and promotion of gender mainstreaming in and through our member churches through revision of liturgies, lectionaries, church policies and practices is worth pursuing in our quest for realizing the vision of an inclusive communion.

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¹³ Mr. Jonah Gokova, in the column "Men For Women" in Connections issue of Vrouwenberaad, Ontwikkelingssamenwerking, March 1999, 13+14